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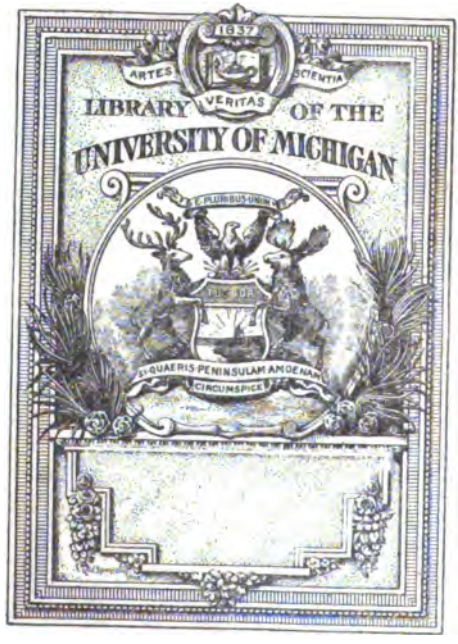

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THE WORKS

OF

THOMAS HOOD.

COMIC AND SERIOUS, IN PROSE AND VERSE, WITH ALL THE ORIGINAL ILLUSTRATIONS.

EDITED, WITH NOTES,

BY HIS SON AND DAUGHTER.

VOL. IX.

LONDON:
E. MOXON, SON, & Co., DOVER STREET,
AND
1 AMEN CORNER, PATERNOSTER ROW.
1872.

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[The following paper I conjecture to be my father's, from finding various notes and copies of advertisements which bear on the subject among his papers.]

THE ADVERTISEMENT LITERATURE OF THE AGE.

THE advertisement has long since become an independent department of literature, subject to its own canons of criticism, having its own laws of composition, and conducted by a class of writers, who though they may (we do not assert they do) acknowledge their inferiority to the great historians, poets, or novelists of the day, would nevertheless consider themselves deeply injured were we to hesitate to admit them into the corporation of the "gens de lettres."

A needy varlet, with his coat out of the elbows, accosted Garrick once upon a time, and to enforce his suit for relief, reminded the great player that they had formerly acted together on the boards of old Drury. Garrick's memory was at fault, and he begged to know upon what occasion he had had that honour.

"Don't you recollect," answered the poor devil, "when you played Hamlet, I used to play the cock!"

In the same manner one of our professional advertisement writers may be supposed to address such an author as Sir Edward Bulwer, "When you wrote the 'Last Days of Pompeii,' it was I that puffed it in the —— journal."

The advertisement writer, however, claims kindred with genius of all sorts, and considers himself entitled to a share in the glory of all undertakings under the sun, from the Thames Tunnel to the manufacture of a razor-strop. In fact, he is to the artist, or the shopkeeper, what Homer was to Achilles, Tasso to Godfrey, Camoens to Gama, or Milton to Cromwell; without him, what would his shops avail a Mechi, his XX a Guinness, his pills a Cockle, his Chesterfields a Doudney, his locks a Chubb, or his envelope a Stocken?

—— "He knows the charms
That call fame on such gentle acts as these,
And he can waft their name o'er lands and seas,
Whatever clime the sun's bright circle warms."

The advertisement literature of the day is therefore always worthy of some notice and record. Once a year at least, it is well to glance at it—remark such changes as it may have undergone, and illustrate its actual state by a few random examples. Looking back over the registers of the past year, we observe, in the first place, a decline of poetry in the announcements of our merchants and traders. Few London shops appear at present to keep poets. Warren himself rarely treats us to an ode, and this scarcity of verse is the more surprising when we consider the enormous quantity of the commodity produced by the booksellers, the authors of most of which could not more appropriately employ their poetic powers than in singing the praises of spermaceti-candles, or jet-blacking.

Over-production is indeed nowhere more conspicuous than

in the manufacture of rhymes. We trust the opening of the trade with China may afford a vent for this as well as other branches of our native industry, as it certainly will, if the people of the celestrial empire stand as much in need of fustian as of broadcloth. We could spare "the central flowery land" a legion of bards, and where could that flowery fraternity—out of work at home—with even the doors of No. 20, Strand, closed against them—more appropriately seek a Mæcenas and a meal?

But if the spirit of song is dead in our trading circles,—if there has been in our shops a counter-revolution against the lady muses—we have the satisfaction of perceiving that no decline in prose composition is visible as yet in the same department. We are not going to quote George Robins; it is sufficiently gratifying to remark that the powers of this capital writer continue unimpaired, and that he still remains the undisputed head of his own department, and the greatest composer of an auction-bill in this or any other country. A few specimens of advertising genius in a lower degree will, however, not be amiss. We shall take them at random from a few newspapers that happen to be on the table.

How promptly has the author of the following availed himself of the recent triumphs of the British arms in the East!

"THE CHINESE BAND MARCH, as performed on the Glorious Ratification of Peace with Great Britain, concluded by Sir Henry Pottinger, with a splendid Lithographic Frontispiece, containing a distant View of Nankin."

The anticipation here is a fine stroke of art, the peace in question not having been ratified up to the last advices from China. It reminds one of the brilliant hit made by Demades in Timon.

"*Dem.* Hear, my human Jupiter, the decree I have written concerning thee before the Areopagites: 'Whereas Timon, a champion and wrestler, was in one day victor of both the Olympic games.'

"*Timon.* But I never saw the Olympic games.

"*Dem.* What of that? That makes no matter, thou shalt see them hereafter." *

The tea-dealers, of course, consider China as their own property. Their organs are particularly eloquent just now; one has the following burst:

"THE TRADE WITH CANTON BEING NOW QUITE OPEN, the Public, who suffered so much by the late Speculations, have a right to reap the full Benefit of the present Depression. They shall reap it."

This is Demosthenic.

Another is Ciceronian, and expatiates more copiously on the same theme:

"THE GLORIOUS NEWS FROM THE EAST is everywhere hailed with delight and gratitude. In consequence of the highly important Announcement of Peace with China, we take the earliest opportunity of making known to the Public—that we have commenced selling all descriptions of Tea much cheaper."

Our next specimen is no less than a discovery of a new species of liberty, for which the Chartists and Miss Mary Anne Walker will, of course, be duly grateful:

"MORISONIAN PRIZES for the three best Essays on the Medical Liberty of the Subject. For particulars apply to the Medical Dissenter Office, &c. !"

We have long had political liberty, civil liberty, religious liberty, commercial liberty, and now medical liberty is added to the number, so that there is reason to fear that liberty will become—a drug!

* "Timon." Edited by the Rev. A. Dyce, for the Shaksperian Society.

It appears we have a new charter to fight for, and a new "mountain nymph" to woo; we may free ourselves from magistrates and priests, we may shake off the yoke of corn lords or cotton lords, but slaves we shall be still, if we do not likewise emancipate ourselves from the doctors. One advantage in this last struggle is that physical force will be unobjectionable, as it is always fair to combat an enemy with his own weapons. We shall disarm the surgeons and slay them with their own lancets, and the best way to dispose of the druggists will be to drug them; "The Medical Liberty of the Subject," will be a toast henceforward at public dinners; and a new toast was clearly wanting, for the public is heartily tired of "the people," "The wooden walls of Old England," and so forth.

The advertisements of the tailors and the upholstery warehouses, during the past years, have been more remarkable for their substantial philanthropy than the ornaments of style. The very spirit of Howard breathes in the announcement of the house that offers to transport "furniture and bedding, carriage free, regardless of distance, to any part of the country." You may quarter yourself in the remotest fishing-village in the Orkneys, it is all the same to this enterprising establishment, whose benevolence annihilates space, and would shake you down a feather bed on the summit of Snowdon, before the ink was dry on your order. Probably in the word "country" they include the entire British Empire, in which case their feeling and their furniture would cheerfully accompany you to the very island of Hong-Kong, should you wish to visit that new settlement, and leave your card for Commissioner Lin.

The upholsterers, however, are not entirely forgetful of the graces of composition. We observe that the climax is a figure which they use with the best effect. Mark, how the

epithets rise one above another in the following scale of prices:

"'PERSONS ABOUT TO MARRY' are informed that
A four-roomed house is furnished completely for £25!
A six-roomed house elegantly for £79!!
A ten-roomed house luxuriously for £178!!!
A twelve-roomed house superbly for £335!!!!"

The tailors also know how to combine classical taste with Christian charity.

"'THE PONCHO OVERCOAT' is recommended as 'the most classic Garment introduced since the Augustan era.'"

The modesty of the "since" will be observed. The "Poncho Overcoat" does not pretend to be more classic than the Roman Toga.

Another tailoring proclamation manifests no desire but to save the public the income-tax. We suspect the government of having some hand in the advertisements of this class. What right has any man to grumble at paying the tax-gatherer, when he can compensate himself in five minutes, by purchasing a Chesterfield at a certain house in Lombard Street.

But commend us to the Dublin knights of the thimble for an attractive manifesto. A house of the immortal name of Guinness dazzles us with the offer of "a superfine coat made to order for 1*l.* 10*s.* 6*d.*!" This promises to efface the glory of the XX.

The same Irish journal contains the following capital *double entendre*, for which we give the ingenious writer a great deal of credit:

"AS HOUSEKEEPER, or would act as Cook and Housekeeper, a steady active Woman of the Established Church, who perfectly understands her business in both capacities. She is a good practical Cook, understands soups, made-dishes, confectionary in all its branches, breakfast-bread, marketing, and keeping accounts; also the fashionable mode

of sending up dinner. Has long and satisfactory discharges: can be highly recommended by the lady she has just left, in consequence of a change in the establishment, with whom she has lived three years."

It has long been known that all good cooks in Ireland are of the Established Church, but the art here consists in making it doubtful whether the advertiser is more renowned for her soups than her sanctity. She "perfectly understands her business in both capacities," one capacity being culinary and the other religious. When we come to "a good practical cook" it occurred to us that it was possibly a mistake for "a good practical Christian." Her understanding of "accounts" obviously includes the long account to be settled with Heaven's chancery; and the "change in the establishment" alluded to, may be the influx of Puseyite doctrines, which, having some leaning to popery, no staunch Irish protestant cook could tolerate for a moment.

Amongst the beauties of pious advertisements we must also notice the two following, which, however, are not Irish:

"'GOSPEL STORIES FOR CHILDREN.' An attempt to render the chief events of the Life of our Saviour intelligent and profitable to young persons."

The charm of this is merely in the grammar. The next is to be admired for the profusion with which pious images are heaped together to fascinate good people, who may happen to be in want of a governess!

"A LADY OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, moving in the best religious Society, in a quiet cathedral town, is desirous of superintending the education of two little girls under twelve years of age."

"Moving in the best religious society" is a phrase we suspect borrowed from society of another character; it marvellously resembles "moving in the fashionable world;" and probably the two societies are agreeably blended in

the "quiet little cathedral town," which is exquisitely touching. What orthodox mother of two little girls under twelve would not exult in the prospect of having them educated in a "quiet cathedral town?" that is to say, a town blessed with a dean and chapter, and rejoicing in a troop of canons? All cathedral towns, however, are not particularly quiet. We may conclude that our governess does not reside at Canterbury, for example.

The "governess" advertisements continue as rich in beauties as ever. The following is exquisite:

"A CLERGYMAN'S WIFE, who has two little girls of her own, and three pupils, wishes to receive from one to three more, who will share her maternal care, and be treated as parlour boarders."

"Maternal care," and "parlour-boarders!"—the association of these two ideas is so indissolubly established in the public mind, ever since Mr. and Mrs. Squeers were introduced to our acquaintance! Suppose a mother were reported to treat her little daughters "as parlour-boarders" should we not strongly suspect her of being somewhat of a Brownrigg?

The determined effort that more than one "party" is now making in England to put down silver, has not been sufficiently attended to. We clearly do not live in a silver age, or, if we do, it is in a German silver age. The advertiser of German silver and Albata plate assures us that there is nothing so unsilvery as silver. "Silver superseded" meets our eye in capital letters wherever we turn. Real silver is denounced as spurious, and the counterfeit proclaimed to be the only genuine article. Thus write panegyrists of the Albata plate.

"SILVER SUPERSEDED, and those corrosive and injurious metals called Nickel and German Silver, supplanted by the introduction of a new and perfectly matchless Albata Plate, possessing all the richness of

Silver in appearance—with all its durability and hardness—with its perfect sweetness in use—undergoing, as it does, a chemical process, by which all that is nauseous in mixed metals is entirely extracted, resisting all acids, may be cleaned as silver, and is manufactured into every article for the table and sideboard."

But a writer in an adverse interest goes farther still.

"THE PERFECT SUBSTITUTE FOR SILVER.—The celebrity of the rich and silvery appearance and extreme durability of the material made exclusively by ourselves, has induced many attempts to foist upon the public the notoriously deleterious German Silver, under the guises of 'Albata Plate,' 'Berlin Silver,' &c. &c., against which we especially warn them. Aided by an eminent chemist, we have succeeded in purifying our material so that acids do not affect it; it is now so well known and appreciated, that it is universally superseding silver in all its uses. The genuine metal, which is more durable than silver, can only be had at our warehouses."

Silver is exploded by common consent. The only question for the public is, whether the Albata plate, or the "perfect substitute," is the true thing. Our own opinion is, that people must be hard to please, if they are not satisfied with a "perfect substitute," particularly when they are informed on the authority of "an eminent chemist" that it is "the genuine metal," and "more durable than silver" itself.

The Government will, of course, insist upon being paid by the Chinese in German silver: we trust we are not about to be deluged with such a humbug as the real silver, which is good for nothing but the base uses to which Sir Thomas More tells us it is applied by the Utopians. The tradesman must have a great deal of brass who persists in recommending silver for forks and spoons, now that it is "universally" admitted that the old-fashioned precious metal is but a sorry imitation of the genuine German or Albata.

This re-action against silver will, no doubt, influence our forms of expression in many respects. Thus supposing an

address to the Thames to be called for, we should commence thus :

Hail, German-silver Thames !

In a note, however, we should admonish the reader not to suppose we meant the Rhine or the Danube.

An ode to the moon would begin somewhat after this fashion,

More bright than an Albata spoon,
Uprose the glorious moon !

or haply thus :

As through the vale I roam'd with my Amata,
The moon shone forth one blaze of pure Albata.

We are glad to get rid of the jingling phrase of "silver salver," but we must guard against the admission of one quite as bad—"sterlin' Berlin."

Orators must no longer be complimented on their silver accents. We shall talk in future of a German-silver voice, meaning not a guttural articulation, but the most mellifluous of sounds.

"What a charming writer Mr. C—— is! Periods of German silver!" "How harmoniously Mr. D—— declaims! His tones are perfectly Albata!"

We have many speakers and writers who deserve such compliments in the utmost strictness. Indeed, silver promises to be soon as completely "superseded" in our poetry and prose as in our plate. We are beginning to adopt the "perfect substitute" for the sounds of Milton and of Barrow : and there is particularly a rage for the German article.

Gold has not yet been attacked : but who can tell what may happen in the wondrous days we live in? Let Mammon look to himself; the silver column of his empire is shaken,

and the next blow may be at the pillar of gold. There may soon be nothing golden left us but—mediocrity! We have been startled by the following announcement:

"CHEMICA ANTIQUA.—The philosophical experimentalist or other pupil, paying an entrance-fee of Two Hundred Guineas, may be inducted, by a Professor of long experience and research, in both the Ancient and Modern Chemical School, to the verification and profitable application of the Hermetic Science, successfully pursued by the adepto-chemical philosophers of the middle ages, as a source of progressive enrichment to the fortunate operator in this mystical branch of Metallurgic Chemistry."

By this it appears that alchemy is still at work, and how do we know but that something, as much superior to gold as the Albata plate is to silver, may come out of the crucible? To "gild refined gold" may become a common practice, instead of being the poetical type of idle superfluity. We may live to see gold treated as the "yellow dirt" that the divines (who, nevertheless, like to dabble in it) tell us that it is. There will be a new meaning for the phrase "beaten gold," when it is beaten out of the field altogether. Possibly we may live to see the streets paved with it, and the wooden octagons forgotten like the works of M'Adam. As "medical liberty" will be about the same time universally established, we shall not require even so much gold as would gild a pill. Yet at this we cannot help repining, the gilding of the pill is a process so necessary in this life of troubles, and the occasions requiring that judicious operation in moral pharmacy are of such daily recurrence. We shall carefully hoard up a little gold for this most important use; and indeed our alchemist seems desirous to do something of the same kind, for we observe that he proposes to accept a fee of two hundred guineas with each pupil who desires to recommence the *opus magnum* under his learned auspices. This fee does not appear at all exorbitant for an introduction to "a source of pro-

gressive enrichment to the fortunate operator," but we would suggest a payment of the sum in German or Albata silver.

REVIEW.

—♦—

Narrative of a Residence on the Mosquito Shore.

"What is there," says Shakspeare, "in a name?" Clearly nothing, or what living creature thinner-skinned than a rhinoceros would think of settling on the Mosquito Coast? Our epidermis twitches at the idea, settling and Mosquitoes! We should as soon think of courage and quietism, tickling and tranquillity, philosophy and fly-flaps, serenity and stinging-nettles, nestling and gnats, calm and cantharides, bliss and a blister. No, nothing can settle there but the insects themselves.

But we are wrong; human creatures have located or attempted to do so on the Mosquito Coast, and amongst others Mr. Charles Young, who, however, did not stay to grow old there, but has returned to England and has composed a sort of Hand-book for emigrants to the same shore—not as one might suppose, to direct them, when, where, and how to slap and scratch, but to give the adventurers a notion of the "manners and customs of the native tribes, the climate, seasons and productions of the country."

This patriotic or philanthropic design the author has very fairly and fully carried out, and we should seriously recommend all such persons as look towards the Stinging Shore or a home, to read the book before engaging a passage to Cape Gracias à Dios. Emigrants are especially destined to be bitten—first by ship-brokers and colonial agents, before

embarking; next by nameless vermin on board, not to forget the sharks if they go overboard; and on arrival, not only by the natives, should they be cannibals, but by various blood-thirsty beasts, reptiles, and insects. It behoves the wanderer, therefore, to know beforehand to what mordants he will be exposed, in order properly to estimate his own powers of resistance and endurance; for example, whether on the coast in question, he could bear, or would choose to be bitten by, mosquitoes, sand flies, chegoe fleas, ants, and fire-ants, wee-wees (not, as Scotchmen would suppose, very small, but very large ants), galley wasps—whose bite is very bad—snakes, including the sawyer, the golden snake, the whip snake, the Tommy Goff, and the barber's pole—the bite of the two last being venomous—with perhaps a snap from a jaguar. Should the emigrant have nerve and hide strong enough to encounter such teeth and suckers, he will yet do well to consider whether he has stamina for those diseases which especially attack strangers, such as agues, intermittent fevers, or a stroke of the sun, the cure of which by the Spaniards and Ladinos is effected, on the authority of an English merchant and others, by a very strange process.

"They take a glass phial with a large mouth and half fill it with water, tying a piece of calico, &c. over the mouth, so that when it is turned over the water is prevented from escaping. They place the phial in the dew all night, and in such a situation as to be exposed to the influence of the sun till twelve o'clock next day; it is then applied to the head of the patient, mouth downwards, moved about gently till the place is found where the sun has struck, which will be known by the water in the phial bubbling up; and, strange to say, it relieves the patient in a few minutes."

As to the aguish intermittents, let the emigrant as he values his temporal comfort and happiness beware of them—we know by painful experience the lingering torments from that slow poison, malaria, and that there is no remedy but

time, and a removal to an air in quality the very reverse of that which inflicted the disease. But there are other fluids, it appears, equally fatal with malaria, and one, especially, which has been celebrated by Dibdin, Nothing like Grog.—

"One of them sung out in pretty good English, 'How do? me glad to see you—long time you no come!' to which one of our countrymen who had been in the country before, and who knew the Indians, replied, 'Tokoy plenty, English come live with you, bring plenty everything, too much;' on hearing which they testified the most lively satisfaction, not however forgetting to ask for grog."

And again—

"Several Indians were luxuriously swinging in their hammocks made from the bark of a tree called maho, while others were squatting by a wood fire, smoking their short pipes. Now and then one would cry out, 'Ouple tapla ourike' (Friend, give me grog)."

"The population of the Cape must have been at one time numerous. It is said that they could once produce 1000 men capable of bearing arms; now they cannot muster 150—the smallpox and drunkenness having committed woeful ravages. I may well say, in the words of a celebrated writer, 'Unfortunate people! to have strangers come among them as friends, who have proved their deadliest foes. Unhappy countries! where man, for the sake of gain, destroys by liquid poison so many of the human race!"

Unhappy indeed! but oh, what will Father Mathew say—oh, what will Mr. Buckingham say,—what will all the temperance men and the teetotallers say,—what will anybody say, to drams of the fire-water being associated with spiritual instruction!

"A short time since a missionary arrived for the purpose of giving them some idea of a future state. A house was speedily found for him, and he commenced preaching, and for a few Sundays he gave some of the chiefs a glass of grog each to entice them to hear him. At length, one Sunday a great number of the natives attended to hear the white stranger talk. On this occasion the worthy and eloquent gentleman was more than usually eloquent, when one of the chiefs arose, and quietly said, 'All talk—no grog—no good!' and gravely stalked away, followed by all the natives."

The influence of the moon.

"Great precaution ought to be observed in the use of fish, especially when the moon is at or near the full, when they must be eaten perfectly fresh. I know by experience how soon fish becomes unfit for use. Two or three times the natives have come in after hauling the seine at twelve o'clock at night. I have had fish cut open, cleaned, dried, salted, and separately hung over a line, and well protected from the moon's rays, and yet in the morning they have been perfectly unfit for food, the moon having so much greater power here than in England. The same remark applies to pork: when killed at the full it will split, as if rent asunder by some extreme force."

With the above precaution, the settler on the Mosquito Coast may feast like an otter, the sea and river furnishing, amongst others, mullet, calipever, snook, drummer, sun-fish, angel-fish, jew-fish, topham, sheep-head, stone bass, grouper, king-fish, baracouta, snapper, yellow and red mouth grunts, rock-fish, parrot-fish, trunk-fish, carvalho, Spanish mackerel, June-fish, butter-fish, and old wife. Moreover he may have turtle for the catching, or in barter, a green one, of three-hundred weight, for eight yards of Osnaburg, value two dollars. Then for flesh, fowl, and fruit,—but the catalogue is too long to quote, and we must refer the outward bound to the book itself, a small one indeed, but into which Mr. Young has crammed a great deal of information. It seems written with perfect good faith, without, as he avers, any "distortion, exaggeration, or suppression of truth," and will therefore prove an useful guide to such bold, thick-skinned, or phlegmatic, persons as may propose, in spite of the gnats, sand-flies, chegoes, fire-ants, and wee-wees, to settle on the Mosquito Coast.

[It was in the July of this year that the ill-fated "Pegasus" was lost. Among her passengers was poor Elton, the actor, who left a family unprovided for. A benefit was arranged for their assistance at the Haymarket, for which my father wrote the following Address, to be delivered by Mrs. Warner.]

ADDRESS.

HUSH! not a sound! no whisper! no demur!
No restless motion—no intrusive stir!
But with staid presence and a quiet breath,
One solemn moment dedicate to Death!

[*A pause.*

For now no fancied miseries bespeak
The panting bosom, and the wetted cheek;
No fabled Tempest, or dramatic wreck,
No Royal Sire wash'd from the mimic deck,
And dirged by Sea Nymphs to his briny grave!
Alas! deep, deep beneath the sullen wave,
His heart, once warm and throbbing as your own,
Now cold and senseless as the shingle stone;
His lips, so eloquent, choked up with sand;
The bright eye glazed,—and the impressive hand,
Idly entangled with the ocean weed—
Full fathom five, a FATHER lies indeed!

Yes! where the foaming billows rave the while
Around the rocky Ferns and Holy Isle,
Deaf to their roar, as to the dear applause
That greets deserving in the Drama's cause,
Blind to the horrors that appal the bold,
To all he hoped, or feared, or loved, of old—
To love—and love's deep agony, a-cold;

He, who could move the passions, moved by none,
Drifts an unconscious corse.—Poor Elton's race is run!

Weep for the dead! Yet do not merely weep
For him who slumbers in the oozy deep:
Mourn for the dead!—yet not alone for him
O'er whom the cormorant and gannet swim;
But, like Grace Darling in her little boat,
Stretch out a saving hand to those that float—
The orphan Seven—so prematurely hurl'd
Upon the billows of this stormy world,
And struggling—save your pity take their part—
With breakers huge enough to break the heart!

[It was in this year, as far as I can ascertain, that the two next poems were written.]

YOUTH AND AGE.

IMPATIENT of his childhood,
"Ah me!" exclaims young Arthur,
Whilst roving in the wild wood,
"I wish I were my father!"

Meanwhile, to see his Arthur
So skip, and play, and run,
"Ah me!" exclaims the father,
"I wish I were my son!"

TO HENRIETTA,*

ON HER DEPARTURE FOR CALAIS.

WHEN little people go abroad, wherever they may roam,
They will not just be treated as they used to be at home;
So take a few promiscuous hints, to warn you in advance,
Of how a little English girl will perhaps be served in France.

Of course you will be Frenchified; and first, it's my belief,
They'll dress you in their foreign style as à-la-mode as beef,
With a little row of beehives, as a border to your frock,
And a pair of frilly trousers, like a little bantam cock.

But first they'll seize your bundle (if you have one) in a crack,
And tie it with a tape by way of bustle on your back;
And make your waist so high or low, your shape will be a riddle,
For anyhow you'll never have your middle in the middle.

Your little English sandals for a while will hold together,
But woe betide you when the stones have worn away the leather;
For they'll poke your little pettitoes (and there will be a hobble!)
In such a pair of shoes as none but carpenters can cobble!

What next?—to fill your head with French to match the native girls
In scraps of *Galignani* they'll screw up your little curls;

* The daughter of my father's old friend William Harvey, the artist.

And they'll take their nouns and verbs, and some bits of
verse and prose,
And pour them in your ears that you may spout them
through your nose.

You'll have to learn a *chou* is quite another sort of thing
To that you put your foot in; that a *belle* is not to ring;
That a *corne* is not the nubble that brings trouble to your
toes;
Nor *peut-être* a potato, as *some* Irish folks suppose.

No, no, they have no murphies there, for supper or for
lunch,
But you may get in course of time a *pomme de terre* to
munch,
With which, as you perforce must do as Calais folks are
doing,
You'll maybe have to gobble up the frog that went a
wooing!

But pray at meals, remember this, the French are so polite,
No matter what you eat or drink, "whatever is, is right!"
So when you're told at dinner-time that some delicious stew
Is cat instead of rabbit, you must answer "*Tant mi—eux!*"

For little folks who go abroad, wherever they may roam,
They cannot just be treated as they used to be at home;
So take a few promiscuous hints, to warn you in advance,
Of how a little English girl will perhaps be served in France!

[My father's contributions to the "Athenæum" this year were confined to some remarks on the Art Union system which was just coming into vogue.]

THE POLYPICNIC.

—♦—

We hope to be excused if we are this week a little prosy in our gossip, profitable rather than pleasant. The truth is, that, following the example of the great "National schemers, who thought it becoming in them to libel those who at a public meeting protested against their selfish project, as alike injurious to art and artists," the projectors of the 'Little-go,' finding public opinion running desperately against them, have been pleased to throw suspicion on our motives; as if our motives had, or could have, anything to do with the question at issue. But the parties know well, that private and personal feelings would have led us to remain silent, had we not felt that it was public duty to denounce the moral pestilence which is fast spreading over the country, and they were forewarned that it was our intention to do so. They are shocked, it appears, at our presuming to call the Polytechnic Union a 'Little-go.' Why the word is not ours, —the offence is so described in the 42 Geo. 3, cap. 119; and for the further information of the parties, extracts from the Act are given among the miscellaneous paragraphs at the end of this day's paper. However, we are not wedded to a name, —we will call it, if they please, 'Polypicnic,' and this will serve to distinguish it from the Parent Institution. Polypicnic, indeed, will well characterise it, seeing that it is a sort of chance-medley affair, to which Art and Science contribute prizes of prints, drawings, paintings, sculptures, bronzes, mathematical, astronomical, and "all kinds" of philosophical apparatus, working models, etc.—the last comprehensive

phrase leaving open to the imagination of provincial subscribers all that is associated with dips into lucky bags, and ventures with Mr. Merryman. The writer in question, too, is not a little indignant that in the face of such a lottery scheme we should have associated the Polypicnic with Derby sweeps, Twelfth Cake raffles, and other sporting speculations, which do not even profess to encourage Art, or Science, geology, conchology, or indeed anything in particular except the love of gambling. The Polypicnic, it is admitted, resembles a lottery, inasmuch as it proposes to give prizes; but then it does not resemble one, in as far as it does not encourage rash and improvident ventures when the chance success is remote and uncertain. But where is the essential difference? The chance of winning one of the great government prizes may have been remote and uncertain, but they were described and supposed to be quite otherwise, or Messrs. Bish, Goodrich, Swift, and Co. might have shut up their offices. In fact, the bribe of a bird in the hand with the prospect of the bird in the bush—say an improved fiddle or a patent mangle—all prizes and no blanks—is strictly in the style of the old contractors, and admirably adapted to excite the spirit of speculation. But we are told that Art Unions are a "*fait accompli*," otherwise the writer "would put forth opinions" not very "palatable to those concerned in the project"—that is to say, would denounce them as we have done. Now, that the cause of public morals may not lose the support of any man, let us remind the writer that lotteries were at one time quite as well established as Art Unions—had "assumed the form, and were endowed with all the prerogatives, of that combination of circumstances which diplomatists call a *fait accompli;*" nevertheless they were put down by law, and were denounced as "public nuisances," because it was universally admitted

that they did encourage gambling—"rash and improvident ventures."

Our association of the Great-go with the Little one was, therefore, perfectly natural. We can no more disconnect them, than some of the Polypicnic prizes from the working models, philosophical apparatus, etc. etc., in the Polytechnic Exhibition. But are we, therefore, averse to mere trading speculations? Certainly not, except where they may tend to demoralise the public, or are carried under false colours. We will suggest a case. The Polly, freighted by a private company of merchant adventurers, arrives on a savage coast, inhabited by a rude and barbarous race, as ignorant as unlearned pigs of Painting, Sculpture, Astronomy, Mechanics, Music, and as ignorant as Adam of the Parisian fashions. However, a profitable traffic is established on the terms, that for each ounce of gold dust the naked savage subscriber shall receive, instanter, a string of cut steel buttons with a ticket, giving him a chance of obtaining, by raffle, a pair of shoe buckles, a pocket looking glass, or a gold-laced cocked hat. Now, the introduction of the ardent spirit of gambling, with, or without, that of firewater, is objectionable enough: but what can or ought to be said if, looking up at the masthead of the Polly, we behold a large flag or bunting Prospectus, inscribed, "For the promotion of Morals and Civilisation!" Why, what *can* be said, but that the trading voyage has as much to do with the diffusion of moral or intellectual enlightenment as the Polypicnic with the encouragement of art and science? Of what avail to a civilised savage as ignorant of the fine arts as a fine-drawing tailor—who knows no more of painting in oil than a whale, of water-colours than a water kelpie, of sculpture than a stone blind, of bronzes than the green man in Hyde Park, of conchology than a shell-fishmonger, or of statuary than a parish stone-breaker

—of what avail to such an ignorant benighted Hottentot, that he is entitled, as a prize holder, to enter and select, to the value of £10, from the stock of six picture galleries and the Polytechnic. It is not difficult to guess into which exhibition he will eventually walk, where he will encourage Art and Science by choosing a miniature steam engine, which will serve at any rate for a toy for the boys, or a model of a frigate, which he thinks will look well on the garden pond.

The Polytechnic encourage art and science! Yes, as much as the twelfth-cake lotteries will induce a taste for polite literature—the Tea-board raffles promote tee-totalism, and the Derby sweeps improve the breed of horses: ay, as certainly as throwing dice will give rise to lots of draining, and the union of thimble rig with capital acting (by the decoys) will foster and encourage the regular drama! Nay, we think that the Polytechnic may effect quite as much for Art and Science as the following "*Distribution*," the scheme of which was advertised in the *Times* of Tuesday last.

"YORK HAM AND TONGUE DISTRIBUTION.—All Prizes!

T. YEATES, Ham Dealer and Confectioner, 23, Strand, and Corner of Dean Street, Westminster (established 50 years), intends DISTRIBUTING £1000 worth of real YORK HAMS, TONGUES, &c., in 8000 Shares at 2*s.* 6*d.* per Share, to take place on Wednesday, May 3, 1843. List of Prizes—2 at £20, 5 at £10, 10 at £5, 40 at £2, 100 at £1, 200 at 10*s.*, 1000 at 5*s.*, and 6643 at 1*s.* The holders of Shares to select from the Shares themselves. To prevent the disappointment so many experienced in his late Twelfth Cake Distribution, an early application is necessary. Persons residing in the country sending 31 Post Office Stamps, or Post Office Orders, will have the requisite number of Shares forwarded by return of post. T. Y. assures his friends every article shall be of the best quality procurable."

[My father in the course of this year became an occasional contributor to "Punch." His lines entitled "A Drop of Gin" were written to an illustration by Kenny Meadows. It was in the Christmas Number that, along with "The Pauper's Christmas Carol," appeared "The Song of the Shirt." The great sensation created by this throughout all England, will be remembered by many.]

A DROP OF GIN.

Gin! Gin! a drop of Gin!
What magnified monsters circle therein!
Ragged, and stained with filth and mud,
Some plague spotted, and some with blood!
Shapes of misery, shame, and sin!
Figures that make us loathe and tremble,
Creatures scarce human that more resemble
Broods of diabolical kin,
Ghost and vampyre, demon and Jin!

Gin! Gin! a drop of Gin!
The dram of Satan! the liquor of Sin!—
Distilled from the fell
Alembics of hell,
By Guilt, and Death,—his own brother and twin!—
That man might fall
Still lower than all
The meanest creatures with scale and fin.
But, hold;—we are neither Barebones nor Prynne,
Who lashed with such rage
The sins of the age;
Then, instead of making too much of a din,
Let Anger be mute,
And sweet Mercy dilute,
With a drop of pity, the drop of Gin!

Gin! Gin! a drop of Gin!
When, darkly, Adversity's days set in,
And the friends and peers
Of earlier years
Prove warm without, but cold within,
And cannot retrace
A familiar face
That's steeped in poverty up to the chin;
But snub, neglect, cold-shoulder, and cut
The ragged pauper, misfortune's butt;
Hardly acknowledged by kith and kin,
Because, poor rat!
He has no cravat,
A seedy coat, and a hole in that!—
No sole to his shoe, and no brim to his hat;
Nor a change of linen—except his skin;
No gloves, no vest,
Either second or best;
And, what is worse than all the rest,
No light heart, though his trousers are thin—
While time elopes
With all golden hopes,
And even with those of pewter and tin;
The brightest dreams,
And the best of schemes,
All knocked down, like a wicket by Mynn.
Each castle in air
Seized by giant Despair,
No prospect in life worth a minnikin pin;
No credit, no cash,
No cold mutton to hash,
No bread—not even potatoes to mash;
No coal in the cellar, no wine in the binn—

Smashed, broken to bits,
With judgments and writs,
Bonds, bills, and cognovits distracting the wits,
In the webs that the spiders of Chancery spin—
Till, weary of life, its worry and strife,
Black visions are rife of a razor, a knife;
Of poison—a rope—"louping over a linn."

Gin! Gin! a drop of Gin!
Oh! then its tremendous temptations begin,
To take, alas!
To the fatal glass;—
And happy the wretch that does not win
To change the black hue
Of his ruin to "blue"—
While angels sorrow, and demons grin—
And lose the rheumatic
Chill of his attic
By plunging into the Palace of Gin!

[Perhaps the most curious thing connected with the publication of "The Song of the Shirt," was the number of persons who had the incomprehensible audacity to claim its authorship. One young gentleman in Birmingham was mentioned by name either by his friends or himself—and I find a letter, in a volume of newspaper cuttings, containing the following passage :—"I have just read to my great surprise the announcement in your paper that Mr. Hood wrote 'The Song of the Shirt,' because I *know positively* that what I before stated to you is the fact." Luckily, in the teeth of this obstinate evidence, there was the testimony of the proprietors of "Punch," or my father might have been brazened out of his own verses.]

THE SONG OF THE SHIRT.

With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A woman sat, in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread—
Stitch! stitch! stitch!
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch
She sang the "Song of the Shirt."

"Work! work! work!
While the cock is crowing aloof!
And work—work—work,
Till the stars shine through the roof!
It's Oh! to be a slave
Along with the barbarous Turk,
Where woman has never a soul to save,
If this is Christian work!

"Work—work—work
Till the brain begins to swim;
Work—work—work
Till the eyes are heavy and dim!
Seam, and gusset, and band,
Band, and gusset, and seam,
Till over the buttons I fall asleep,
And sew them on in a dream!

"Oh, Men, with Sisters dear!
Oh, Men, with Mothers and Wives!
It is not linen you're wearing out,
But human creatures' lives!
Stitch—stitch—stitch,
In poverty, hunger and dirt,
Sewing at once, with a double thread,
A Shroud as well as a Shirt.

"But why do I talk of Death?
That Phantom of grisly bone,
I hardly fear his terrible shape,
It seems so like my own—
It seems so like my own,
Because of the fasts I keep;
Oh, God! that bread should be so dear,
And flesh and blood so cheap!

"Work—work—work!
My labour never flags;
And what are its wages? A bed of straw,
A crust of bread—and rags.

That shatter'd roof—and this naked floor—
A table—a broken chair—
And a wall so blank, my shadow I thank
For sometimes falling there!

"Work—work—work!
From weary chime to chime,
Work—work—work—
As prisoners work for crime!
Band, and gusset, and seam,
Seam, and gusset, and band,
Till the heart is sick, and the brain benumb'd,
As well as the weary hand.

"Work—work—work,
In the dull December light,
And work—work—work,
When the weather is warm and bright—
While underneath the eaves
The brooding swallows cling
As if to show me their sunny backs
And twit me with the spring.

"Oh! but to breathe the breath
Of the cowslip and primrose sweet—
With the sky above my head,
And the grass beneath my feet,
For only one short hour
To feel as I used to feel,
Before I knew the woes of want
And the walk that costs a meal!

"Oh! but for one short hour!
A respite however brief!
No blessed leisure for Love or Hope,
But only time for Grief!
A little weeping would ease my heart,
But in their briny bed
My tears must stop, for every drop
Hinders needle and thread!"

With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A woman sat in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread—
Stitch! stitch! stitch!
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch,—
Would that its tone could reach the Rich!—
She sang this "Song of the Shirt!"

[The following verse appears in the original MS. of "The Song of the Shirt."]

Seam, and gusset, and band,
Band, and gusset, and seam,
Work, work, work,
Like the Engine that works by Steam!
A mere machine of iron and wood,
That toils for Mammon's sake,
Without a brain to ponder and craze,
Or a heart to feel—and break!

THE PAUPER'S CHRISTMAS CAROL.

FULL of drink and full of meat,
On our SAVIOUR'S natal day,
CHARITY'S perennial treat;
Thus I heard a Pauper say:—
"Ought not I to dance and sing
Thus supplied with famous cheer?
Heigho!
I hardly know—
Christmas comes but once a year.

"After labour's long turmoil,
Sorry fare and frequent fast,
Two-and-fifty weeks of toil,
Pudding-time is come at last!
But are raisins high or low,
Flour and suet cheap or dear?
Heigho!
I hardly know—
Christmas comes but once a year,

"Fed upon the coarsest fare
Three hundred days and sixty-four
But for *one* on viands rare,
Just as if I wasn't poor!
Ought not I to bless my stars,
Warden, clerk, and overseer?
Heigho!

I hardly know—
Christmas comes but once a year.

"Treated like a welcome guest,
One of Nature's social chain,
Seated, tended on, and press'd—
But when shall I be press'd again,
Twice to pudding, thrice to beef,
A dozen times to ale and beer?
Heigho!
I hardly know—
Christmas comes but once a year.

"Come to-morrow how it will;
Diet scant and usage rough,
Hunger once has had its fill,
Thirst for once has had enough,
But shall I ever dine again?
Or see another feast appear?
Heigho!
I only know—
Christmas comes but once a year!

"Frozen cares begin to melt,
Hopes revive and spirits flow—
Feeling as I have not felt
Since a dozen months ago—
Glad enough to sing a song—
To-morrow shall I volunteer?
Heigho!
I hardly know—
Christmas comes but once a year.

"Bright and blessed is the time,
Sorrows end and joys begin,
While the bells with merry chime
Ring the Day of Plenty in!
But the happy tide to hail,
With a sigh or with a tear,
Heigho!
I hardly know—
Christmas comes but once a year!"

A DRAMATIC CRITICISM.

We have seen an actor play *Hamlet*, in the Ghost scene, with so little sense of propriety, as not only to draw his sword, according to the stage practice, but actually to threaten and make a lunge at the parental apparition with the naked weapon. Nothing can be in worse taste. *Marcellus*, it is true, offers to strike at the Royal Phantom with his partizan, but the act, though somewhat disloyal, is not unfilial. But in *Hamlet*—the Son of the Shade—the attempt at violence is unnatural and parricidal, and totally at variance with his character. He shrinks from bloodshed, though supernaturally enjoined, and remembers the ties of kindred. Witness his extreme reluctance to kill his uncle; whereas, a man who tries to stab a ghost, will assuredly *Stick at Nothing*.

1844.

[My father's connection with the "New Monthly" ceased at the close of 1843, and this year his contributions to it were published in two volumes called "Whimsicalities, a Periodical Gathering," of which the Preface follows. Their contents have already appeared in this edition, or in the Second Series of "Hood's Own."]

WHIMSICALITIES.

PREFACE.

It is proper to state that the majority of the papers in the present Volumes were contributed to the New Monthly Magazine during the Author's late Editorship of that Periodical. Whether they deserved reprinting or repressing, must be determined between the public and the literary Court of Review.

As usual, the Reader will vainly look in my pages for any startling theological revelations, profound political views, philological disquisitions, or scientific discoveries. As fruitlessly will he seek for any Transcendental speculations, Antiquarian gossip, or Statistical Table Talk. And least of all will he find any discussion of those topics which occupy the leaders and misleaders of the daily prints:—for any enlightenment, Bude or Boccius, on the dark ways of Parliament and Downing Streets, or the dangerous crossing between the Church and the Catholic Chapel. He might as well expect to have his cigar lighted by the Sun, or his "arms found" by the "Morning Herald."

As little will the anticipations be realised of the feminine reader, who seeks for love rhapsodies, higher flown than the Aërial Carriage; for scenes of what is called Fashionable Life; or the serious sentimentalities of that new Paradoxurus the Religious Novel. She might as well go to St. Benet Sherehog for Berlin wool; or hope to dance, at the Ball of St. Paul's, to Weippert's last New Quadrilles.

My humble aim has been chiefly to amuse: but the liberal Utilitarian will, perhaps, discern some small attempts to instruct at the same time. He will, maybe, detect in "The Defaulter," a warning against rash and uncharitable judgments; in the "Black Job," a "take care of your pockets, from the Pseudo-Philanthropists;" in "Mr. Withering's Cure," a hint on Domestic Economy; in the "Omnibus," a lesson to Prudery; and in the "News from China," a satire on maternal over-indulgence, and the neglect of moral culture in the young. He may, possibly, discover in the "Earth Quakers," a hit at the astrological quackery, not only of Doctor Dee, but of more modern Zadkiels; and recognise in the "Grimsby Ghost," the correction of a Vulgar Error, that Spirits come and go on very immaterial errands. In the "Schoolmistress Abroad," a deliberate design is acknowledged, to show up that system of Boarding School Education which renders a Young Lady as eligible for a wife, as a strange female would be for a Housekeeper, with only a Twelfth Night character.

Here this Preface might end: but old associations, and the approach of a season specially devoted to hospitality, good fellowship, charity, and the Christian virtues, irresistibly impel me to the expression of a few benevolent wishes towards the World in general, and my own Country, nay, my own County in particular. We have all an open, or sneaking kindness, for our peculiar province, as the sporting

yeomanry well knew, and felt, when they translated Pitt's regimental motto, which they pronounced "Pro Haris et Focis,"—for our Hares and Foxes.

In this spirit, my kindest aspirations are offered to my Readers, and in particular to those nearest home. If there be any truth in the statistics of publication, my Comic Annuals, heretofore, have afforded some slight diversion to the cares of Man, Woman, and Middlesex, and it is my earnest hope and ambition that my "Whimsicalities" may still serve the same purpose in the same "trumpery sphere."

If a word may be added, it is a good one in favour of the Artist who has supplied the illustrations; and who promises, by his progressive improvement, that hereafter our "Leech Gatherers" shall not only collect in bags or baskets, but in portfolios.

THOMAS HOOD.

December 4, 1843.

[In January appeared the first number of "Hood's Magazine," which had been announced at the close of the previous year, in the following Prospectus.]

HOOD'S MAGAZINE AND COMIC MISCELLANY.

PROSPECTUS.

Whatever may be thought of Dr. Dickson's theory, that the type of disease in general is periodical, there can be no doubt of its applicability to modern literature, which is essentially periodical, whether the type be long primer, brevier, or bourgeois. It appears, moreover, by the rapid consumption of monthlies, compared with the decline of the annuals, that frequent fits of publication are more prevalent and popular than yearly paroxysms.

Under these circumstances, no apology is necessary for the present undertaking; but custom, which exacts an overture to a new opera, and a prologue to a new play, requires a few words of introduction to a new monthly magazine.

One prominent object, then, of the projected publication, as implied by the sub-title of "Comic Miscellany," will be the supply of harmless "Mirth for the Million," and light thoughts, to a public sorely oppressed—if its word be worth a rush, or its complaints of an ounce weight—by hard times, heavy taxes, and those "eating cares" which attend on the securing of food for the day, as well as a provision for the future. For the relief of such afflicted classes, the editor, assisted by able humourists, will dispense a series of papers and woodcuts, which, it is hoped, will cheer the gloom of Willow Walk, and the loneliness of Wilderness Row—sweeten the bitterness of Camomile Street and Wormwood Street—smoothe the ruffled temper of Cross Street, and enable even Crooked Lane to unbend itself! It is hardly necessary to promise that this end will be pursued without raising a maiden blush, much less a damask, in the nursery grounds of modesty—or trespassing, by wanton personalities, on the parks and lawns of private life. In a word, it will aim at being merry and wise, instead of merry and otherwise.

For the sedate, there will be papers of a becoming gravity; and the lover of poetry will be supplied with numbers in each number.

As to politics, the reader of "Hood's Magazine" will vainly search in its pages for a panacea for agricultural distress, or a grand Catholicon for Irish agitation; he will uselessly seek to know whether we ought to depend for our bread on foreign farmers, or merely on foreign sea-fowl; or, if the repeal of the Union would produce low rents and only three quarter days. Neither must we hope to learn the proper terminus

of reform, nor even whether a finality man means Campbell's last man, or an undertaker.

A total abstinence from such stimulating topics and fermented questions is, indeed, ensured by the established character of the editor, and his notorious aversion to party spirit. To borrow his own words, from a letter to the proprietors,—"I am no politician, and far from instructed on those topics which, to parody a common phrase, no gentleman's newspaper should be without. Thus for any knowledge of mine, the Irish prosecutions may be for pirating the Irish melodies; the Pennsylvanians may have repudiated their wives; Duff Green may be a place, like Goose Green; Prince Polignac a dahlia or a carnation, and the Duc de Bordeaux a tulip. The Spanish affairs I could never master, even with a *Pronouncing* Dictionary at my elbow; it would puzzle me to see whether Queen Isabella's majority is or is not equal to Sir Robert Peel's; or, if the shelling the Barcelonese was done with bombs and mortars, or the nutcrackers. Prim may be a quaker, and the whole civil war about the Seville Oranges. Nay, even on domestic matters, nearer home, my profound political ignorance leaves me in doubt on questions concerning which the newsmen's boys and printers' devils have formed very decided opinions; for example, whether the corn law league ought to extend beyond three miles from Mark Lane—or the sliding scale should regulate the charges at the glaciarium—what share the Welsh whigs have had in the Welsh riots, and how far the Ryots in India were excited by the slaughter of the Brahmin Bull. On all such public subjects I am less *au fait* than that Publicist the Potboy, at the public-house, with the insolvent sign, The Hog in the Pound."

Polemics will be excluded with the same rigour; and especially the Tractarian schism. The reader of "Hood's

Magazine" must not hope, therefore, to be told whether an old Protestant church ought to be plastered with Roman cement; or if a design for a new one should be washed in with Newman's colours. And most egregiously will he be disappointed, should he look for controversial theology in our Poets' Corner. He might as well expect to see Queens of Sheba, and divided babies, from wearing Solomon's spectacles!

For the rest, a critical eye will be kept on our current literature, a regretful one on the drama, and a kind one for the fine arts, from whose artesian well there will be an occasional *drawing*.

With this brief explanatory announcement, "Hood's Magazine and Comic Miscellany" is left to recommend itself, by its own merits, to those enlightened judges, the reviewers; and to that impartial jury—too vast to pack in any case—the British public.

THE HAUNTED HOUSE.*

A ROMANCE.

"A jolly place, said he, in days of old,
But something ails it now: the spot is curst."
WORDSWORTH.

PART I.

SOME dreams we have are nothing else but dreams,
Unnatural, and full of contradictions;
Yet others of our most romantic schemes
Are something more than fictions.

* The Rev. G. P. A. Longmore has translated this poem into Latin verse—a task the difficulty of which any scholar can appreciate.

It might be only on enchanted ground ;
It might be merely by a thought's expansion ;
But, in the spirit or the flesh, I found
An old deserted Mansion.

A residence for woman, child, and man,
A dwelling place,—and yet no habitation ;
A House,—but under some prodigious ban
Of Excommunication.

Unhinged the iron gates half open hung,
Jarr'd by the gusty gales of many winters,
That from its crumbled pedestal had flung
One marble globe in splinters.

No dog was at the threshold, great or small ;
No pigeon on the roof—no household creature—
No cat demurely dozing on the wall—
Not one domestic feature.

No human figure stirr'd, to go or come,
No face look'd forth from shut or open casement ;
No chimney smoked—there was no sign of Home
From parapet to basement.

With shatter'd panes the grassy court was starr'd ;
The time-worn coping-stone had tumbled after ;
And thro' the ragged roof the sky shone, barr'd
With naked beam and rafter.

O'er all there hung a shadow and a fear ;
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted !

The flow'r grew wild and rankly as the weed,
Roses with thistles struggled for espial,
And vagrant plants of parasitic breed
Had overgrown the Dial.

But gay or gloomy, steadfast or infirm,
No heart was there to heed the hour's duration;
All times and tides were lost in one long term
Of stagnant desolation.

The wren had built within the Porch, she found
Its quiet loneliness so sure and thorough;
And on the lawn,—within its turfy mound,—
The rabbit made his burrow.

The rabbit wild and gray, that flitted thro'
The shrubby clumps, and frisk'd, and sat, and vanish'd,
But leisurely and bold, as if he knew
His enemy was banish'd.

The wary crow,—the pheasant from the woods—
Lull'd by the still and everlasting sameness,
Close to the mansion, like domestic broods,
Fed with a "shocking tameness."

The coot was swimming in the reedy pond,
Beside the water-hen, so soon affrighted;
And in the weedy moat the heron, fond
Of solitude, alighted.

The moping heron, motionless and stiff,
That on a stone, as silently and stilly,
Stood, an apparent sentinel, as if
To guard the water-lily.

No sound was heard except, from far away,
The ringing of the witwall's shrilly laughter,
Or, now and then, the chatter of the jay,
That Echo murmur'd after.

But Echo never mock'd the human tongue;
Some weighty crime, that Heaven could not pardon,
A secret curse on that old Building hung,
And its deserted Garden.

The beds were all untouch'd by hand or tool;
No footstep marked the damp and mossy gravel,
Each walk as green as is the mantled pool,
For want of human travel.

The vine unpruned, and the neglected peach,
Droop'd from the wall with which they used to grapple;
And on the canker'd tree, in easy reach,
Rotted the golden apple.

But awfully the truant shunn'd the ground,
The vagrant kept aloof, and daring Poacher;
In spite of gaps that thro' the fences round
Invited the encroacher.

For over all there hung a cloud of fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted!

The pear and quince lay squander'd on the grass;
The mould was purple with unheeded showers
Of bloomy plums—a Wilderness it was
Of fruits, and weeds, and flowers!

The marigold amidst the nettles blew,
The gourd embraced the rose bush in its ramble,
The thistle and the stock together grew,
The holly-hock and bramble.

The bear-bine with the lilac interlaced,
The sturdy bur-dock choked its slender neighbour,
The spicy pink. All tokens were effaced
Of human care and labour.

The very yew Formality had train'd
To such a rigid pyramidal stature,
For want of trimming had almost regain'd
The raggedness of nature.

The Fountain was a-dry—neglect and time
Had marr'd the work of artisan and mason,
And efts and croaking frogs, begot of slime,
Sprawl'd in the ruin'd bason.

The Statue, fallen from its marble base,
Amidst the refuse leaves, and herbage rotten,
Lay like the Idol of some by-gone race,
Its name and rites forgotten.

On ev'ry side the aspect was the same,
All ruin'd, desolate, forlorn, and savage :
No hand or foot within the precinct came
To rectify or ravage.

For over all there hung a cloud of fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted !

PART II.

O, VERY gloomy is the House of Woe,
Where tears are falling while the bell is knelling,
With all the dark solemnities which show
That Death is in the dwelling!

O very, very dreary is the room
Where Love, domestic Love, no longer nestles,
But, smitten by the common stroke of doom,
The Corpse lies on the trestles!

But House of Woe, and hearse, and sable pall,
The narrow home of the departed mortal,
Ne'er look'd so gloomy as that Ghostly Hall,
With its deserted portal!

The centipede along the threshold crept,
The cobweb hung across in mazy tangle,
And in its winding-sheet the maggot slept,
At every nook and angle.

The keyhole lodged the earwig and her brood,
The emmets of the steps had old possession,
And march'd in search of their diurnal food
In undisturb'd procession.

As undisturb'd as the prehensile cell
Of moth or maggot, or the spider's tissue,
For never foot upon that threshold fell,
To enter or to issue.

O'er all there hung the shadow of a fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted!

Howbeit, the door I push'd—or so I dream'd—
Which slowly, slowly gaped,—the hinges creaking
With such a rusty eloquence, it seem'd
That Time himself was speaking.

But Time was dumb within that Mansion old,
Or left his tale to the heraldic banners,
That hung from the corroded walls, and told
Of former men and manners:—

Those tatter'd flags, that with the open'd door,
Seem'd the old wave of battle to remember,
While fallen fragments danced upon the floor,
Like dead leaves in December.

The startled bats flew out,—bird after bird,—
The screech-owl overhead began to flutter,
And seem'd to mock the cry that she had heard
Some dying victim utter!

A shriek that echo'd from the joisted roof,
And up the stair, and further still and further,
Till in some ringing chamber far aloof
It ceased its tale of murther!

Meanwhile the rusty armour rattled round,
The banner shudder'd, and the ragged streamer;
All things the horrid tenor of the sound
Acknowledged with a tremor.

The antlers, where the helmet hung, and belt,
Stirr'd as the tempest stirs the forest branches,
Or as the stag had trembled when he felt
The blood-hound at his haunches.

The window jingled in its crumbled frame,
And thro' its many gaps of destitution
Dolorous moans and hollow sighings came,
Like those of dissolution.

The wood-louse dropped, and rolled into a ball,
Touch'd by some impulse occult or mechanic;
And nameless beetles ran along the wall
In universal panic.

The subtle spider, that from overhead
Hung like a spy on human guilt and error,
Suddenly turn'd, and up its slender thread
Ran with a nimble terror.

The very stains and fractures on the wall
Assuming features solemn and terrific,
Hinted some Tragedy of that old Hall,
Lock'd up in hieroglyphic.

Some tale that might, perchance, have solved the doubt,
Wherefore amongst those flags so dull and livid,
The banner of the BLOODY HAND shone out
So ominously vivid.

Some key to that inscrutable appeal,
Which made the very frame of Nature quiver;
And ev'ry thrilling nerve and fibre feel
So ague-like a shiver.

For over all there hung a cloud of fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted;
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted!

If but a rat had linger'd in the house,
To lure the thought into a social channel!
But not a rat remain'd, or tiny mouse,
To squeak behind the panel.

Huge drops roll'd down the walls, as if they wept;
And where the cricket used to chirp so shrilly,
The toad was squatting, and the lizard crept
On that damp hearth and chilly.

For years no cheerful blaze had sparkled there,
Or glanced on coat of buff or knightly metal;
The slug was crawling on the vacant chair,—
The snail upon the settle.

The floor was redolent of mould and must,
The fungus in the rotten seams had quicken'd;
While on the oaken table coats of dust
Perenially had thicken'd.

No mark of leathern jack or metal can,
No cup—no horn—no hospitable token,—
All social ties between that board and Man
Had long ago been broken.

There was so foul a rumour in the air,
The shadow of a Presence so atrocious;
No human creature could have feasted there,
Even the most ferocious.

For over all there hung a cloud of fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted!

PART III.

'Tis hard for human actions to account,
Whether from reason or from impulse only—
But some internal prompting bade me mount
The gloomy stairs and lonely.

Those gloomy stairs, so dark, and damp, and cold,
With odours as from bones and relics carnal,
Deprived of rite, and consecrated mould,
The chapel vault, or charnel.

Those dreary stairs, where with the sounding stress
Of ev'ry step so many echoes blended,
The mind, with dark misgivings, fear'd to guess
How many feet ascended.

The tempest with its spoils had drifted in,
Till each unwholesome stone was darkly spotted,
As thickly as the leopard's dappled skin,
With leaves that rankly rotted.

The air was thick—and in the upper gloom
The bat—or something in its shape—was winging;
And on the wall, as chilly as a tomb,
The Death's-Head moth was clinging.

That mystic moth, which, with a sense profound
Of all unholy presence, augurs truly ;
And with a grim significance flits round
The taper burning bluely.

Such omens in the place there seem'd to be,
At ev'ry crooked turn, or on the landing,
The straining eyeball was prepared to see
Some Apparition standing.

For over all there hung a cloud of fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted !

Yet no portentous Shape the sight amazed ;
Each object plain, and tangible, and valid ;
But from their tarnish'd frames dark Figures gazed,
And Faces spectre-pallid.

Not merely with the mimic life that lies
Within the compass of Art's simulation ;
Their souls were looking thro' their painted eyes
With awful speculation.

On ev'ry lip a speechless horror dwelt ;
On ev'ry brow the burthen of affliction ;
The old Ancestral Spirits knew and felt
The House's malediction.

Such earnest woe their features overcast,
They might have stirr'd, or sigh'd, or wept, or spoken ;
But, save the hollow moaning of the blast,
The stillness was unbroken.

No other sound or stir of life was there,
Except my steps in solitary clamber,
From flight to flight, from humid stair to stair,
From chamber into chamber.

Deserted rooms of luxury and state,
That old magnificence had richly furnish'd
With pictures, cabinets of ancient date,
And carvings gilt and burnish'd.

Rich hangings, storied by the needle's art
With scripture history, or classic fable;
But all had faded, save one ragged part,
Where Cain was slaying Abel.

The silent waste of mildew and the moth
Had marr'd the tissue with a partial ravage;
But undecaying frown'd upon the cloth
Each feature stern and savage.

The sky was pale; the cloud a thing of doubt;
Some hues were fresh, and some decay'd and duller;
But still the BLOODY HAND shone strangely out
With vehemence of colour!

The BLOODY HAND that with a lurid stain
Shone on the dusty floor, a dismal token,
Projected from the casement's painted pane,
Where all beside was broken.

The BLOODY HAND significant of crime,
That glaring on the old heraldic banner,
Had kept its crimson unimpair'd by time,
In such a wondrous manner!

O'er all there hung the shadow of a fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted!

The Death Watch tick'd behind the panel'd oak,
Inexplicable tremors shook the arras,
And echoes strange and mystical awoke,
The fancy to embarrass.

Prophetic hints that filled the soul with dread,
But thro' one gloomy entrance pointing mostly,
The while some secret inspiration said,
That Chamber is the Ghostly!

Across the door no gossamer festoon
Swung pendulous—no web—no dusty fringes,
No silky chrysalis or white cocoon
About its nooks and hinges.

The spider shunn'd the interdicted room,
The moth, the beetle, and the fly were banish'd,
And where the sunbeam fell athwart the gloom
The very midge had vanish'd.

One lonely ray that glanced upon a Bed,
As if with awful aim direct and certain,
To show the BLOODY HAND in burning red
Embroider'd on the curtain.

And yet no gory stain was on the quilt—
The pillow in its place had slowly rotted;
The floor alone retain'd the trace of guilt,
Those boards obscurely spotted.

Obscurely spotted to the door, and thence
With mazy doubles to the grated casement—
Oh what a tale they told of fear intense,
Of horror and amazement!

What human creature in the dead of night
Had coursed like hunted hare that cruel distance?
Had sought the door, the window in his flight,
Striving for dear existence?

What shrieking Spirit in that bloody room
Its mortal frame had violently quitted?—
Across the sunbeam, with a sudden gloom,
A ghostly Shadow flitted.

Across the sunbeam, and along the wall,
But painted on the air so very dimly,
It hardly veil'd the tapestry at all,
Or portrait frowning grimly.

O'er all there hung the shadow of a fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted!

A TALE OF TEMPER.

Of all cross breeds of human sinners,
The crabbedest are those who dress our dinners;
Whether the ardent fires at which they roast
And broil and bake themselves like Smithfield martyrs,

Are apt to make them crusty, like a toast,
Or drams, encouraged by so hot a post;
However, cooks are generally Tartars;
And altogether might be safely cluster'd
In scientific catalogues
Under two names, like Dinmont's dogs,
Pepper and Mustard.

The case thus being very common,
It followed, quite of course, when Mr. Jervis
Engaged a clever culinary woman,
He took a mere Xantippe in his service—
In fact—her metal not to burnish,
As vile a shrew as Shrewsbury could furnish—
One who in temper, language, manners, looks,
In every respect
Might just have come direct
From him, who is supposed to send us cooks.

The very day she came into her place
She slapp'd the scullion's face;
The next, the housemaid being rather pert,
Snatching the broom, she "treated her like dirt —
The third, a quarrel with the groom she hit on—
Cyrus, the page, had half-a-dozen knocks;
And John, the coachman, got a box
He couldn't sit on.

Meanwhile, her strength to rally,
Brandy, and rum, and shrub she drank by stealth,
Besides the Cream of some mysterious Valley
That may, or may not, be the Vale of Health:
At least while credit lasted, or her wealth—

For finding that her blows came only thicker,
Invectives and foul names but flew the quicker,
The more she drank, the more inclined to bicker,
The other servants, one and all,
Took Bible oaths whatever might befal,
Neither to lend her cash, nor fetch her liquor!

This caused, of course, a dreadful schism,
And what was worse, in spite of all endeavour,
After a fortnight of Tea-totalism,
The Plague broke out more virulent than ever!
The life she led her fellows down the stairs!
The life she led her betters in the parlour!
No parrot ever gave herself such airs,
No pug-dog cynical was such a snarler!
At woman, man, and child, she flew and snapp'd,
No rattlesnake on earth so fierce and rancorous—
No household cat that ever lapp'd
To swear and spit was half so apt—
No bear, sore-headed, could be more cantankerous—
No fretful porcupine more sharp and crabbed—
No wolverine
More full of spleen—
In short, the woman was completely rabid!

The least offence of look or phrase,
The slightest verbal joke, the merest frolic,
Like a snap-dragon set her in a blaze,
Her spirit was so alcoholic!
And woe to him who felt her tongue!
It burnt like caustic—like a nettle stung,
Her speech was scalding—scorching—vitriolic!

And larded, not with bacon fat,
Or anything so mild as that,
But curses so intensely diabolic,
So broiling hot, that he, at whom she levell'd,
Felt in his very gizzard he was devill'd!

Often and often Mr. Jervis
Long'd, and yet feared, to turn her from his service;
For why? Of all his philosophic loads
Of reptiles loathsome, spiteful, and pernicious,
Stuff'd Lizards, bottled Snakes, and pickled Toads,
Potted Tarantulas, and Asps malicious,
And Scorpions cured by scientific modes,
He had not any creature half so vicious!

At last one morning
The coachman had already given warning,
And little Cyrus
Was gravely thinking of a new cockade,
For open War's rough sanguinary trade,
Or any other service, quite desirous,
Instead of quarrelling with such a jade—
When accident explain'd the coil she made,
And whence her Temper had derived the virus!

Struck with the fever, called the scarlet,
The Termagant was lying sick in bed—
And little Cyrus, that precocious varlet,
Was just declaring her "as good as dead,"
When down the attic stairs the housemaid, Charlotte,
Came running from the chamber overhead,

Like one demented ;
Flapping her hands, and casting up her eyes,
And giving gasps of horror and surprise,
Which thus she vented—
"O Lord ! I wonder that she didn't bite us !
Or sting us like a Tantalizer,*
(The note will make the Reader wiser,)
And set us all a dancing like St. Witus !

"Temper ! No wonder that the creatur had
A temper so uncommon bad !
She's just confess'd to Doctor Griper
That being out of Rum, and like denials,—
Which always was prodigious trials,—
Because she couldn't pay the piper,
She went one day, she did, to Master's wials,
And drunk the spirit as preserved the Wiper !"

* Tarantula.

MRS. BURRAGE.

A TEMPERANCE ROMANCE.

"Water, water everywhere."—*Coleridge.*

"There's nothing like grog."—*Dibdin.*

"For the water swells a man."—*Falstaff.*

"Come, come, wine is a good familiar creature if it be well used—exclaim no man against it."—*Iago.*

"Give it me without water; so, my friend, so."—*Rabelais.*

"'I believe, an' please your Honour,' quoth the Corporal, 'that if it had not been for the quantity of brandy we set fire to every night, and the claret and cinnamon with which I plied your Honour off—'

"And the Geneva, Trim,' added my Uncle Toby, 'which did us more good than all.'"—*Tristram Shandy.*

CHAPTER I.

TEMPERANCE is a virtue.

"No doubt of it," cries a little fat, plethoric gentleman, with a sanguine complexion, and a very short neck—too short to be long in this world.

"It's the summut of human Virtue," exclaims a tall long vinegar-faced female, holding up a Teatotal Tract.

"A Virtue that will preserve itself in any climate," shouts an advertiser of quack nostrums.

"And a Virtue that costs nothing," adds a Templar of Pump Court.

"It is virtuous for de outside of a man, and for de inside of a man," says a foreign water-curate.

"It's a Cardinal Virtue," cries a Romish Priest, not hopeless, perhaps, of arriving by water at a Red Hat.

"And a primitive Virtue," puts in a friend in drab. "It was practised by our first parents."

"A Virtue that is its own reward," exclaims a scholastic copyholder.

Then what need, say I, of a Temperance Medal?

CHAPTER II.

HEAVENS! what a hubbub!

What an uproar from Teatotal Presidents, Vice Presidents, Grand Masters, and Grand Mistresses! What an awful flourishing of white staves, and red hands, and brown cudgels! I shall have my eye punched out by a total abstinence fist, or my nose broken by Sobriety's flagstaff, or my skull fractured by a temperate shillelagh! Yes; I shall be brained by yonder red-headed hod-carrier, with the muddy knees,—who, for all his uproarious support of the element, would as soon be choked as drink Boyne Water! No matter: I must speak my mind.

"You shall do no such thing," screams a she-Rechabite, "unless you speak your mind on our side."

"Tell the brass band to play up, and drown his voice!" roars a brother-bite.

"He's a publican and sinner," squeaks a little old woman, the very model for a Water Witch. "Pump on him! Duck him! Drown him!" cries an admirer of aquatic sports.

"Make him take the pledge!" bellows Waterman No. 1.

"And kneel to the 'Postle!" bawls Waterman No. 2.

"And force him to be blest!" bellows Waterman No. 3.

"And to buy a medal!" suggests a Hebrew member of the Numismatic Society. Which brings us round again to the old question, as to the need of a Temperance Medal at all.

There are no such honorary badges for the other virtues—for example, Honesty, Charity, Veracity—then why a medal for Temperance?

"Vy!" exclaims the Wandering Jew. "Vy, becos if ve melts up all the metal for medals, there von't be no pewter left to make quart and pint pots."

Bravo, Moses! Thou hast extemporised the most reasonable reason yet advanced in favour of the ridiculous decoration! A sort of *Water*loo medal, precociously worn before the moral battle is even fought—much less won!

CHAPTER III.

"And do you really think, sir," asks a little woman, in an Eau du Nil coloured bonnet, with watered ribbons, "do you really think that there is any harm in wearing such an ornament?"

"No wickedness, Ma'am, but great weakness. Something of that contemptible vanity which induces certain people to decorate themselves with the ribbon or insignia of foreign orders, conferred on themselves by themselves."

"Ah—you're agin the cause!"

"Far from it, Madam. On the contrary; I was for many months a strict teatotaller. Nay, I not only abstained from wine, beer, and spirits, for my own good; but, from the same exalted motive, drank daily, almost hourly, the most nasty, filthy, nauseous, abominable, disgusting draughts, to smell and taste, that my doctor and apothecary could invent. But did I, therefore, bedeck myself with rewards of merit, or was I treated with any public honours? Who gave me a medal for swallowing, for my health's sake, vile tincture of bark?

Who invested me with a Blue Ribbon, for improving my appetite by chamomile tea? Who waved a green banner over me, for drinking infusion of senna? Or ground even a hurdy-gurdy before me, for taking castor oil? Faugh! my gorge rises at the remembrance! And your teatotaller, forsooth, is to be decorated, like a Knight of the Bath, for only quaffing, for soul and body's sake, nice, pure, sweet, delicious water! the Nectar of the Naiads!"

"Then, of course, Sir, with such sentiments, you would not kneel down, and be blessed by the Apostle of Temperance?"

"Certainly not, Madam. When I kneel to mortal, it will be to my lady-love, or her Majesty the Queen; but to man never!"

"Ah! because the Father is a popish priest."

"Not at all. But because the posture, however common amongst the Neales and O'Neils, is not an English one. In the time of the 'Spectator,' indeed, it was usual for a dutiful son to kneel down to his parents for a blessing. But Father Mathew is not my father, nor, although an Irishman, is he my mother, to entitle him to such a filial genuflexion. I can respect the man and honour the cause; but as to dropping on my knees, like some of his proselytes, whenever I found myself in Theobald's Road——"

"Well, for my part, Sir, I don't mind saying, I did kneel to him at the great Marrowbone meeting—I should say Mary-le-bone."

"As you please, Madam; but the hinges of my legs are not so pliant. Besides, consider the monstrous inconvenience that would result; for, after kneeling to Fathew Mathew, I should feel bound, on temperance principles, to drop on my pans to some thousand or so of other meritorious individuals —beginning with my friend Martin the Painter."

"A painter!"

"Yes—for his Plan for Supplying the Metropolis with Spring Water."

"Are you serious, Sir?"

"Quite, Madam. I decidedly think that every Protestant man, woman, or child, who has knelt to Father Mathew, is bound, in common consistency, to fall on his or her knees, shine or shade, wet or dry, dust or mud, rough or smooth, easy or greasy, not only to Mr. Martin, but to Mr. Pedley, Mr. Robins, Mr. Schweppe, Captain Pidding, and the Directors of the Chelsea Water Works, the East London Water Works, the New River Company, the East India Company; the Master Wardens, and Members of the Grocers' Company; Captain Claridge, Mr. Braidwood, the parish turncocks; in short, every notable patron of tea and water in the kingdom.'

"Mercy on us!"

"Nay more, Ma'am, I venture to say, that if any person ever kissed Father Mathew, he or she is bound, by the movement, to kiss every one of the personages I have just enumerated,—and Mr. Mackay into the bargain,—for so strongly recommending the Thames and its Tributaries."

CHAPTER IV.

"Now really, really," says the fat red-faced gentleman with the short neck, "really now, you are really,—too bad! To turn such a cause into ridicule!"

"Who?—I, my dear Sir? Heaven forbid! It is its own watery-headed pumpkins of followers—temperate perhaps in body, but certainly not sober-minded—who render it ridiculous. A great authority has compared public meetings to farces; but what with its processions and its brass bands, its

banners and crosses, its green scarves and blue sashes,—its foppery and its poppery—its stepfathers, Roman monks, and bearded pilgrims—its terrific combats between the Wapping bullies and the pot-valiants—and its teatotal choruses, from its six foolish virgins in white,—a Mathewite meeting bade fair to become—"

"What, sir—what?"

"A GRAND MELODRAMATIC PANTOMIME WITH REAL WATER!!!"

"Very well, Sir—very well, indeed! I see you are not for the promotion of temperance amongst the lower classes!"

"On the contrary. But, my dear Moses, just cease for a moment the jingling of your medals—my dear female Rechabite, have the goodness to take your wet tract out of my eye,—and my dear little printseller, be off with your portraits of the apostle. If the poor man must lay out his pence or shilling in a picture, let him have a cheap print, at cost price, of Hogarth's Gin Lane."

"Humph! Why then, Sir, you do approve of temperance in the lower orders?"

"Yes; certainly. But I have some misgivings, when I see a flock of bleating human animals, plunging, helter-skelter, follow-my-leader, into the fresh water—as Dingdong's sheep rushed into the herring-pond—not from principle, but gregarious impulse. I should like to know how many of the converted have already broken their rash pledges—how many are at this hour writhing, like poor Mr. Brunel, with their temperance medals sticking in their throats."

"Why, then, you are against the Movement after all?"

"Nay. I would move still farther—for I would water not only the bodies of the poor and ignorant, but their minds—open to them not merely the parish pump, but the springs of knowledge. In plain words, I would educate them,—furnish

schools for them,—and, as in the schools abroad, 'la morale' should form a distinct and prominent item in the prospectus. They should be taught that temperance involves something more than a mere abstinence from strong drinks—that it forbids man to be 'drunk with pride'—to be 'intoxicated with vanity'—to be 'overcome with anger'—to be 'far gone in hatred;' and, above all, that he must renounce blood-thirstiness, as well as his thirst for mountain-dew or Cream of the Valley.

"Then we shall see the humble bricklayer and his labourer become such builders as Young describes, men who

> 'On reason build resolve,
> That column of true majesty in man!'

Then will the artizan kneel down to God—his true Father—and regard as his best temperance pledges those little living ones that prattle around him. Then he will walk steadily and soberly, without a white wand,—eschew blue-ruin without a blue-scarf,—drink his glass of water without a medal for it,—and sip his cup of Bohea without a teatotal hullabaloo from six young women in white."

"Well, for all your skits, Sir," says the florid bull-necked gentleman, "I must and will say I admire a Mathewite meeting."

"And so do I," cries the little woman, in the Eau du Nil coloured bonnet, with the watered ribbons. "It's such a beautiful sight!"

"It's such a powerful moral engine," says the stout, florid gentleman.

"Then I wish," mutters a simple Fire-Brigade man, "we had had it at the fire at Topping's wharf."

CHAPTER V.

"But Mrs. Burrage!"

Patience, dear Reader, patience. She was not quite in a fit state to be introduced to you: I was obliged to enter into that little preliminary discussion on temperance to allow her time to get tipsy.

But now—lo! there she sits, that little plump woman, with her moist blue eye, with a drop in it, like a violet wet with dew—her nose nubbly and red as a rose-bud—her cheeks blushing like the full-blown damask flower—and her mouth half-open, like a street-door left ajar—according to the Arabian superstition—for the Evil Spirits to drop in. The fore-finger of her right hand is crooked round the stem of an empty wine-glass, and with her other hand she gives a twitch at her cap and the row of brown curls under it, which having gone a little a-jee on one side, she tugs as far awry on the other.

Yes, there she sits—in melancholy contrast to the scene around her; for Mr. Burrage, a strict teatotaller, has fitted up his parlour to match his principles. Nothing, you see, but the most chaste and cool colours;—none but the most temperate images. The curtains are of a pale sky-blue—the carpet is of sober drab and browns—the paper of a cream-colour ground, with a meandering pattern of aquatic weeds, and white water-lilies, interwoven with that vegetable emblem of sobriety, the Pitcher Plant—and in each curve of the pattern a little fish. On the mantel-shelf—in the middle—stands one of those Fountain Clocks, that eternally pour forth a limpid stream, clear as glass, and spirally twisted like a stick of barley-sugar. On each side of the clock is a large

marine shell, and at either end of the shelf, a biscuit-ware River God, with his urn under his arm. Over the fire-place hangs a large framed print of Rebecca at the Well, and on the opposite wall, an engraving of Moses smiting the Rock. On the right of the door is an original drawing in water-colours of the New River Head—and on the left, on a bracket, and under a bell-glass, a cork model of Aldgate Pump. From the centre of the ceiling, in lieu of chandelier, hangs a huge pumpkin—and on the little table near the window is an alabaster vase, with a cluster of little doves on the brim, sipping the imaginary pool, with one bird, which should be looking heavenward, as if in gratitude for the draught, but that Female Intemperance, in too rudely washing it, had wrung off its little head. What else? Why, if you could look into that corner cupboard, you would see a splendid Silver Tea Pot, presented by Mr. B. to his helpmate, in the vain hope of attaching her to the Chinese beverage.

"No, no," mutters Mrs. Burrage with a nod and a wink and a smile at nobody, "He won't get *me* to be a te— a to—, a to-tittler!"

CHAPTER VI.

Now, exactly as Mrs. Burrage mispronounced the last word of her soliloquy, the Teatotaller entered the room, and catching the jumbled syllables, guessed immediately at the cause.

"Ellen!—you have been drinking again!"

"Only the least drop, John—only the least modicum—nothing but a drain of rum."

"*Nothing* but ardent spirits!—*Only* fermented liquor; only liquid fire! *You* had better drink poison at once!"

"Perhaps—I had."

"I say, woman, you might as well swallow arsenic or oxalic acid!"

"Yes, or corrosive sub—sublimity," stammered the Bacchanal, for she had got into her old cups, the hiccups. "Well, perhaps I shall!"

"Ellen, Ellen, you will break my heart! You will drive me mad!"—and the afflicted man, throwing himself into a chair, leaned his arms and head on the round table. His face was hidden; but his wife could hear his sobs, and see the heaving of his shoulders—and a change came over her countenance. The vacant stare and the idiotic simper, gave place to a sober gravity; and, hastily rising from her seat, she staggered towards her husband and threw her arms round his neck.

"John—dear John—I will take tea—or water—whatever you like."

"Oh, that you would only drink water!" groaned John, getting up on his legs, and mechanically stretching forth his right arm like an orator; for, on temperance themes, that greatest of all water-drinkers, the whale, was not more of a spouter, "Oh, that you would but drink water! The beverage of our first parents before they knew sin! The pure fluid of the founting! The diamond of the dessert! (he meant desert.) Oh, that you would take to water, hard or soft, river or pump, plain or mineral, callybeat or sulfurious."

"Or fly-water—or lau—lau—laurel water," muttered his perverse helpmate.

The Teatotaller dropped into his chair again as if he had been shot!

"I will, I WILL poison myself!" screamed the repentant

woman, running and throwing herself at full length on the sofa, in a passion of grief, which at last subsided into a heavy sleep. But even in her slumbers, she continued to murmur of poison, arsenic, laudanum, oxalic acid, and "corrosive sublimity."

"And she will, too!" exclaimed the disconsolate husband, with a violent gesture of his right arm, as if he were dashing to the ground some bottle of deadly fluid, "She will, too, in some of her low fits!"

For, as happens to all persons with the same unhappy failing, the physical excitement was succeeded by exhaustion and depression—a "flow of spirits" by a flood of tears. Her most volatile flights always ended in a plunge in the Slough of Despond. What more likely than that, under the weight of bodily discomfort and mental anguish, from dejection and remorse, she would fulfil the dreadful threat?

"And she will, too!" repeated the poor Teatotaller, as he carefully searched the table-drawer and the cupboard, anxiously sniffing at every phial, and tasting every powder. But he only found a little Sal Volatile, some pounded rotten-stone, and a paper of common salt.

And nothing else?

Yes—a black bottle half full of some liquid which by the smell and taste he ascertained, at some risk to his pledge, to be very fine Pine-apple Rum.

"The horrid creature!" exclaims our she-Rechabite—whose nose, by the way, is of a deeper crimson than becomes her sober professions, though she may be an aquatic bird notwithstanding, as even the Water Hen has sometimes a very red beak.—"The horrid creature! such Silenuses are a disgrace to our sex!"

CHAPTER VII.

Poor Mr. Burrage! what a night he passed—or rather what a night passed him—for, could he have given it the go-by, most assuredly it would have been at a quicker pace.

The moment he closed his eyes in sleep, the image of his wife stood before him, with a large packet marked "Poison" in one hand, and a great bottle labelled "Laudanum" in the other. He tried to snatch them from her; but from a stroke of that universal paralysis so common in dreams, he was utterly powerless—helpless—speechless. A passive spectator, he could only look on at the dreadful tragedy enacted before him, in a succession of rash acts. For slowly, slowly, the wretched woman unfolded the packet and uncorked the phial—then deliberately, so deliberately that the operation seemed to occupy an age, she licked up the fatal powder, and next drank the deadly dose, taking after it an enormous white lump of what he understood by intuition to be sugar of lead. A strange imitation of the ordinary process of taking medicine—but dreams are often mere *parodies* of the realities of life.

All this while the Teatotaller made frantic efforts to arrest the suicidal deed—and if desperate *willing it* could have sufficed, according to the theory of the Magnetisers, he would certainly have mesmerised the visionary arms and hands of his partner into some stiff and safe attitude—but, alas! the most intense volition would not even lift his own finger. No man ever intended more energetically to bawl out, but he could not even accomplish the squeak of a mouse; never was the Spirit of Determination so swaddled up in the Mummy of Imbecility!

In the meantime the features of the poisoned woman exhibited the most awful changes. Her face—at first of a cadaverous white, except the mouth, which was of an unnatural red—a face of dough with lips of sealing-wax—suddenly became flushed with crimson, that deepened into purple, and thence almost to black. Her eyes, one moment closed as if under the influence of the narcotic, at the next started wide open, and began protruding from her head like those of a snail—anon turning inwards, they disclosed nothing but the whites—and finally, mocking a catastrophe not uncommon to wax dolls, dropped bodily into her head. As for her cheeks, they had attained to a frightful puffiness; but, instead of being white or crimson, they were now discoloured with dreadful blotches, blue, yellow, or green, and at last turning to large spots of a livid colour with red edges—like rounds of ship-beef.

It was a dismal sight! but how much more so, when, suddenly falling on the floor, she became spasmodically convulsed, and threw herself into more postures and contortions than any tumbler on the stage. But at last these ceased; and her body swelled prodigiously—her head thrice the natural size. The death-rattle was heard in her throat—but with supernatural loudness—a white foam, afterwards bloody, oozed from her black lips; the eyes, returning to their sockets, rolled horribly—most horribly! and, after a long, deep-drawn sigh, she puffed into his face, as he bent over her, the last parting breath—smelling powerfully of pine-apple rum!

She was gone!—but no—she was not—for the shock to his nerves awoke the Teatotaller—and turning on his pillow he saw his wife by his side—she was alive and breathing, and her face was of its natural complexion—but her lips were moving, and, approaching his ear, he

distinctly heard her murmur—"Yes—I will—I will take it."

"And did she, Sir?"

My dear, curious Reader,—*she did.*

CHAPTER VIII.

THE next morning the Teatotaller rose, and went to his occupation abroad, as usual, for he was the Co. of a small linendrapery establishment in the City; but he was sadly unfit for business; as who could be otherwise, with his heart as heavy as a slack-baked loaf, his head as confused as mixed pins, his nerves as unstrung as the harp of Tara's halls, and altogether as unhinged as the Gates of Somnauth. In fact, he entered the shop with such a melancholy face—as if he had forsworn even animal spirits—that his partner inquired anxiously after his health.

"Why, middling, had a bad night;" but he did not add that he was having almost as bad a day from his waking dreams; nor that, from the perturbation of the optic nerves, the pink sprigs on the printed cotton before him seemed to be wriggling about like clusters of worms. There was a half-mourning chintz, too, with round black spots on it that rolled about, distressingly like *her* eyeballs.

"And how was Mrs. B.?" inquired the partner.

"Why, pretty well, thankee," as indeed she might be for all he knew; but alas! for all he knew, she might be, at that very moment, as he had seen her in his vision, namely, with her whole frame drawni nto an arch, only resting on the heels and the back of the head. She was, perhaps, even then swelling to that portentous bulk with a head huge as three,

and a face changing from pink to purple, like the shot silk in the window. He even seemed to smell—it might be the odour of the dye, from the stuffs and bombazines; but in his nostrils it was the smell of a narcotic associated with sleep everlasting.

In vain he tried to get rid of the gloomy impression; it clung to him like a wet garment, chilling him to his very soul. At sight you would have set him down, not a Teatotaller, but a confirmed drunkard; his hand shook so, he never snipped the linen with the scissors at the right nick; his eyes dazzled so, he offered puce-ribbons to match with snuff colour, and declared blue satin to be the best raven black. As for the bills, he could neither make them out nor sum them up correctly; he was too busy with the Bills of Mortality; and he invariably gave the wrong change. In short, to use a common phrase, his mind was poisoned, and, as a natural consequence, his thoughts were corroded, his fancies discoloured and distorted, and Reason in a high delirium. As usual in such cases, his brain swarmed with horrible images; whilst the most trifling realities assumed a prophetic significance.

"What a frightful pattern!" exclaimed a maid-servant, as she turned over some remarkably cheap ginghams.

The Teatotaller glanced at the piece she pointed at, and thought so too, for it was sprinkled over with spots of *a livid colour with red edges.*

"And that is not much better," said the girl, tossing aside a remnant of a *flesh-coloured* ground, *blotched with yellow, green, and purple.*

"And that's wus," said the female, rejecting a third sample. "I don't see nothing I like;" and she proceeded to deposit her small purchases of pins and tape, and half a yard of flannel, in her basket, out of which she first took an article

that either occupied too much room or would have endangered the rest—a bottle of some deleterious mixture for the flies, and marked "Poison," in large letters. The linendraper shuddered at the sight, but attempted a grim pleasantry.

"Are you going to drink that, my dear?"

"No; it's for Missus."

"Good God!" ejaculated the Teatotaller, but under his breath, and hastily pushing three shillings and two penny pieces towards his customer, as the change out of her half-crown, for he was almost crazy at the ominous coincidence: "It's meant, yes, it's meant for a warning." And snatching up his hat, without more notice or ceremony than if he had absconded with the till or the cash-box, he bolted out of the Emporium, and ran home, if it was a home, and to his wife, if he had a wife. Of which he had quite as many doubts as one could tie up in a yard of black crape.

CHAPTER IX.

Rap—rap—rap!—No one came to the door.

Ring—ding—ding!—Nobody answered the bell.

"My worst fears then are realized!"—but the conclusion was premature, for the door suddenly opened, whilst his hand again convulsively grasped the knocker, and pulled him into the passage. With trembling nerves, and a palpitating heart, he instantly rushed into the parlour; she was not there! Nor yet in the drawing-room! But her bonnet and shawl lay on the round table. His wife had been out! Perhaps to lay in a fresh stock of pine-apple rum, for he had made away with the bottle in the cupboard. Perhaps, dreadful thought! to purchase some or all of the deadly

drugs she had threatened to swallow. With renewed alarm he hurried up stairs to the bed-chamber, and threw open the door. Yes, thank Heaven! there she was, and alive, and without a blotch on her face. But he had yet his minor misgiving.

"Ellen, you have been out?"

"Well, I know I have."

"To the King's Head?"

"No, John, no. But no matter. You'll be troubled no more with my drinking."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean what I say, John," replied the wife, looking very serious, and speaking very solemnly and deliberately, with a strong emphasis on every word. "You—will—be—troubled —no—more—with—my—drinking—I HAVE TOOK IT AT LAST."

"I knew it!" exclaimed the wretched husband, desperately tossing his arms aloft, as when all is lost. "I knew it!"—and, leaving one coat flap in the hands of his wife, who vainly attempted to detain him, he rushed from the room—sprang down the stairs, both flights, by two and three stairs at a time—ran along the passage, and without his hat or gloves, or stick, dashed out at the street door, sweeping from the step two ragged little girls, a quartern loaf, a bason of treacle, and a baby. But he never stopped to ask if the children were hurt, or even to see whether the infant dripped with gore or molasses. Away he ran, like a rabid dog, straight forward, down the Borough, heedless alike of porter's load, baker's basket, and butcher's tray.

"I say," muttered the errand boy, as he staggered from the collision.

"Do that agin," growled the placard man, as he recovered the pole and board which had been knocked from his shoulder.

"Mind where you're goin'" bawled a hawker, as he picked up his scattered wares; whilst a dandy, suddenly thrust into the kennel, launched after the runner one of those verbal missiles which are said to return, like the boomerang, to those who launch them.

But on, on, on scampered the Teatotaller, heedless of all impediments—on he scoured, like a he-Camilla, to the shop, number 240, with the red, blue, and green bottles in the window—the Chemist and Druggist's, into which he darted, and up to the little bald man at the desk, with barely breath enough left to gasp out "My wife!" "Poison!" and "Pump!"

"Vegetable or mineral?" inquired the Surgeon-Apothecary, with professional coolness.

"Both—all sorts—ladnum—assnick—oxalic acid—corrosive sublimity"—and the Teatotaller was about to add pine-apple rum amongst the poisons, when the Doctor stopped him.

"Is she sick?"

"No." But remembering the symptoms overnight, the Teatotaller ventured to say, on the strength of his dream, that she was turning all manner of colours, like a rainbow, and swelling as big as a house.

"Then there is not a moment to lose," said the Esculapius, and accordingly clapping on his hat, and arming himself with the necessary apparatus—a sort of elephantine syringe with a very long trunk—he set off at a trot, guided by the Teatotaller, to unpoison the rash and ill-fated bacchanalian, Mrs. Burrage.

"And did he save her?"

"My dear madam, be content to let that issue remain a little, and accumulate interest, like a sum in the Saving Bank."

CHAPTER X.

Now, when the Teatotaller, with the medical man at his heels, arrived at his own house, Mrs. Burrage was still in her bed-room; which was a great convenience, for before she could account for the intrusion of the stranger, nay, even without exactly knowing how it was done, she suddenly found herself seated—more zealously than tenderly or ceremoniously—in the easy chair; and when she attempted to expostulate, she felt herself choking with a tube of something, which was certainly neither maccaroni, nor stick-licorice, nor yet pipe-peppermint.

To account for this precipitancy, the exaggerated representations of her husband must be borne in mind; and if his wife did not exhibit all the dying dolphin-like colours that he had described—if she was not yet quite so blue, green, yellow, or black, as he had painted her, the apothecary made sure that she soon would be, and consequently went to work without delay, where delays were so dangerous.

Mrs. Burrage, however, was not a woman to submit quietly to a disagreeable operation, against her own consent; so with a vigorous kick and a push, at the same time, she contrived to rid herself at once of the doctor and his instrument, and indignantly demanded to know the meaning of the assault upon her.

"It's to save your life—your precious life, Ellen," said the Teatotaller, very solemnly.

"It's to empty the stomach, ma'am," said the doctor.

"Empty a fiddle—" retorted Mrs. B., who would have added "stick," but the doctor, watching his opportunity, had

dexterously popped the tube again into her open mouth: not without a fresh scuffle from the patient.

"For the Lord's sake, Ellen," entreated the Teatotaller, confining her hand, "do, do, pray do sit quiet."

"Pob—wob—wobble," said Ellen. "Hub—bub—bub—bubble," attempting to speak with another pipe in her throat besides the windpipe.

"Have the goodness, ma'am, to be composed," implored the doctor.

"I won't," shouted Mrs. Burrage, having again released herself from the instrument by a desperate struggle. "What am I to be pumped out for?"

"Oh, Ellen, Ellen," said the Teatotaller, "you know what you have taken."

"Corrosive salts and narcotics," put in the doctor.

"Assnic and corrosive sublimity," said the Teatotaller.

"Oxalic acid and tincture of opium," added the doctor.

"Fly water and laurel water," said Mr. Burrage.

"Vitriol, prussic acid, and aqua fortis," continued the druggist.

"I've took no such thing," said the refractory patient.

"Oh Ellen, you know what you said."

"Well, what?"

"Why, that your drinking should never trouble me any more."

"And no more it shall!" screamed the wilful woman, falling, as she spoke, into convulsive paroxysms of the wildest laughter. "No more it shall, for I've took—"

"What, ma'am; pray what?"

"In the name of Heaven! What?"

"Why then—I've took the PLEDGE!"

REVIEW.

LIFE IN THE SICK ROOM. By AN INVALID. Moxon.

OF all the know-nothing persons in this world, commend us to the man who has "never known a day's illness." He is a moral dunce: one who has lost the greatest lesson in life; who has skipped the finest lecture in that great school of humanity, the Sick Chamber. Let him be versed in mathematics, profound in metaphysics, a ripe scholar in the classics, a bachelor of arts, or even a doctor in divinity, yet is he as one of those gentlemen whose education has been neglected. For all his college acquirements, how inferior is he in wholesome knowledge to the mortal who has had but a quarter's gout, or a half-year of ague—how infinitely below the fellow-creature who has been soundly taught his tic douloureux, thoroughly grounded in the rheumatics, and deeply red in the scarlet fever! And yet what is more common than to hear a great hulking, florid fellow, bragging of an ignorance, a brutal ignorance, that he shares in common with the pig and the bullock, the generality of which die, probably, without ever having experienced a day's indisposition.

To such a monster of health the volume before us will be a sealed book; for how can he appreciate its allusions to physical suffering, whose bodily annoyance has never reached beyond a slight tickling of the epidermis, or the tingling of a foot gone to sleep? How should he, who has sailed through life with a clean bill of health, be able to sympathise with the feelings, or the quiet sayings and doings, of an Invalid condemned to a life-long quarantine in his chamber? What

should he know of Life in the Sick Room? As little as our poor paralytic grandmother knows of Life in London.

With ourselves it is otherwise. Afflicted for twenty years with a complication of disorders—the least of which is elephantiasis—bedridden on the broad of our back till it became narrow—and then confined to our chamber as rigidly as if it had been a cell in the Pentonville Penitentiary, we are in a fit state, body and mind, to appreciate such a production as Mr. Moxon—not the Effervescing Magnesian, but the worthy publisher—has forwarded with so much sagacity, or instinct, to our own sick ward. The very book for us! if, indeed, we are not actually the anonymous of its dedication—the very fellow-sufferer on whose sympathy—"confidently reckoned on though unasked," the Invalid Author so implicitly relies. We certainly do sympathise most profoundly; and as certainly we are a great sufferer,—the greatest, perhaps, in England, except the poor incurable man who is always being cured by Holloway's Ointment.

Enough of ourselves:—and now for the book. The first thing that struck us on the perusal was a very judicious omission. Most writers on such a topic as the sick-room would have begun by recommending some pet doctor, or favourite remedy for all diseases; whereas the author has preferred to advise on the selection of an eligible retreat for laying-up for life, and especially of a window towards that good aspect, the face of Nature. And truly a long term of infirm health is such a very bad look out, as to require some better prospect elsewhere. For not to mention a churchyard, or a dead wall, what can be worse for a sick prisoner than to pass year after year in some dull street, contemplating some dull house, never new-fronted, or even insured in a new fire-office, to add a new plate to the two old ones under the middle window. What more dreadful than to be driven by the

monotony outside to the sameness within, till the very figures of the chintz curtain are daguerreotyped on the brain, or the head seems lined with a paper of the same pattern as the one on the wall? How much better, for soul and body, for the Invalid to gaze on such a picture as this :—

"Between my window and the sea is a green down, as green as any field in Ireland; and on the nearer half of this down, haymaking goes forward in its season. It slopes down to a hollow, where the Prior of old preserved his fish, there being sluices formerly at either end, the one opening upon the river, and the other upon the little haven below the Priory, whose ruins still crown the rock. From the Prior's fish-pond, the green down slopes upwards again to a ridge; and on the slope are cows grazing all summer, and half way into the winter. Over the ridge, I survey the harbour and all its traffic, the view extending from the light-houses far to the right, to a horizon of sea to the left. Beyond the harbour lies another county, with, first, its sandy beach, where there are frequent wrecks—too interesting to an invalid,—and a fine stretch of rocky shore to the left; and above the rocks, a spreading heath, where I watch troops of boys flying their kites; lovers and friends taking their breezy walk on Sundays; the sportsman with his gun and dog; and the washerwoman converging from the farm-houses on Saturday evenings, to carry their loads, in company, to the village on the yet further height. I see them, now talking in a cluster, as they walk each with her white burden on her head, and now in file, as they pass through the narrow lane; and finally they part off on the village green, each to some neighbouring house of the gentry. Behind the village and the heath, stretches the railroad; and I watch the train triumphantly careering along the level road, and puffing forth its steam above hedges and groups of trees, and then labouring and panting up the ascent, till it is lost between two heights, which at last bound my view. But on these heights are more objects; a windmill now in motion and now at rest; a lime-kiln, in a picturesque rocky field; an ancient church tower, barely visible in the morning, but conspicuous when the setting sun shines upon it; a colliery, with its lofty waggon-way, and the self-moving waggons running hither and thither, as if in pure wilfulness; and three or four farms, at various degrees of ascent, whose yards, paddocks, and dairies I am better acquainted with than their inhabitants would believe possible. I know every stack of the one on the heights. Against the sky I see the stacking of corn and hay in the season, and can detect the slicing away of the provender, with an accurate eye, at the distance of several miles. I can follow the sociable farmer in his summer-evening ride, pricking on in the lanes where he is alone, in order to have more time for the unconscionable gossip at the gate of the next farm-house, and for the second talk over the paddock-fence of

the next, or for the third or fourth before the porch, or over the wall, when the resident farmer comes out, pipe in mouth, and puffs away amidst his chat till the wife appears, with a shawl over her cap, to see what can detain him so long; and the daughter follows, with her gown turned over head (for it is now chill evening), and at last the sociable horseman finds he must be going, looks at his watch, and, with a gesture of surprise, turns his steed down a steep broken way to the beach, and canters home over the sands, left hard and wet by the ebbing tide, the white horse making his progress visible to me through the dusk. Then, if the question arises which has most of the gossip spirit, he or I, there is no shame in the answer. Any such small amusement is better than harmless—is salutary —which carries the spirit of the sick prisoner abroad into the open air, and among country people. When I shut down my window, I feel that my mind has had an airing."

Here is another :—

"The sun, resting on the edge of the sea, was hidden from me by the walls of the old Priory: but a flood of rays poured through the windows of the ruin, and gushed over the waters, strewing them with diamonds, and then across the green down before my windows, gilding its furrows, and then lighting up the yellow sands on the opposite shore of the harbour, while the market-garden below was glittering with dew and busy with early bees and butterflies. Besides these bees and butterflies, nothing seemed stirring, except the earliest riser of the neighbourhood, to whom the garden belongs. At the moment, she was passing down to feed her pigs, and let out her cows; and her easy pace, arms a-kimbo, and complacent survey of her early greens, presented me with a picture of ease so opposite to my own state, as to impress me ineffaceably. I was suffering too much to enjoy this picture at the moment: but how was it at the end of the year? The pains of all those hours were annihilated—as completely vanished as if they had never been; while the momentary peep behind the window-curtain made me possessor of this radiant picture for evermore."

The mention of pictures reminds us of certain ones, and a commentary whence the reader may derive either a receipt, or a warning, as he desires to be, or not to be, an invalid for the remainder of his life. O! those beautiful pictures by our favourite Cuyp, with their rich atmosphere as of golden sherry and water! That gorgeous light flooding the wide level pasture,—clinging to tree and stone, and trickling over

into their shadows—a liquid radiance, we used to fancy we could wring out of the glowing herbage, and catch dripping from the sleek side of the dappled cow! Sad experience has made us personally acquainted with the original soil and climate of those scenes, and has painfully taught us that the rich glowing atmosphere was no such wholesome aërial negus as we supposed, but a mixture of sunshine and humid exhalations, lovely but noxious—a gilded ague, an illuminated fever, a glorified pestilence,—which poisons the springs of life at their source. Breathe it, in bad health, and your fugitive complaints will become chronic,—regular standards,—entwined in all their branches by the parasitic low slow fever of the swamp. In short, you will probably be set in for a long season of foul bodily weather, and may at once consult our Invalid how to play the part in a becoming manner, and "enjoy bad health" with something of the cheerful philosophic spirit of a family man, who on being asked if he had not a "sick-house," replied "Yes—but I've a *well* staircase."

The first grand step towards laying up in ordinary is to get rid of the superb egotism and splendid selfishness of the condition. Lamb, in one of his Essays, has vividly described the gloomy absolutism of the sick man, obsequiously waited on by his household slaves, eager to anticipate his every want and wish, and to administer to his merest whims and caprices.

And for a short reign, such a tyranny may pass, but the confirmed invalid must prepare for a more moderate rule; a limited monarchy instead of a despotism. It requires some self-sacrifice to renounce such autocratical power, and will need much vigilance to prevent a relapse. But who, save a domestic Nero, would wish to indulge in such *ill* behaviour as the following for a permanence?

"I have known the most devoted and benevolent of women call up her young nurse from a snatch of sleep at two in the morning to read aloud, when she had been reading aloud for six or seven hours of the preceding day. I have known a kind-hearted and self-denying man require of two or three members of his family to sit and talk and be merry in his chamber, two or three hours after midnight: and both for want of a mere intimation that it was night, and time for the nurse's rest. How it makes one shudder to think of this being one's own case!"

It is rather difficult to believe in the habitual benevolence or considerateness of the parties who needed a broad hint on such matters; and yet real illness may make even a self-denying nature somewhat *exigeant*, when mere fanciful ailments render selfishness so intensely selfish. Ask the physician, surgeon, and apothecary, and they will tell you, that for every hard-hearted medical man, who refuses or delays to attend on the urgent seizures and accidents of the poor, there are thousands of practitioners dragged from their warm beds at night, through wind, rain, snow, sleet, hail, and thunder and lightning—over heaths and through marshes, and along country cross-roads—at the risk of catarrh, rheumatism, ague, bronchitis, and inflammation—of falls, fractures, and footpads—on the most frivolous pretences that wealth and the vapours can invent. There is even a perversity in some natures that would find a dirty comfort in the muddy discomfort of an Esculapius soused in provincial muck, like Dr. Slop, by an encounter with a coach-horse—for, what right has the physician to enjoy more bodily ease than his patient? For such a spirit we imperatively prescribe a chapter of "Life in the Sick Room," night and morning, until he learns, that the very worst excuse a man can offer for selfishness is, that he is, "not quite himself."

There is, however, another peril of invalidism, akin to the "damning of sins we have no mind to" described in Hudibras:—

"We are in ever-growing danger of becoming too abstract,—of losing our sympathy with passing emotions,—and particularly with those shared by numbers. There was a time when we went to public worship with others,—to the theatre,—to public meetings; when we were present at picnic parties and other festivals, and heard general conversation every day of our lives. Now, we are too apt to forget those times. The danger is, lest we should get to despise them, and to fancy ourselves superior to our former selves, because now we feel no social transports."

True. We have ourselves felt a touch of that peril in our weaker moments—on some dull cold wet day, when our pores, acting inversely, instead of throwing off moisture, take in as much as they can collect from the damp atmosphere, well chilled by an easterly wind. At such times a sort of Zimmermannishness has crept over us, like a moral gooseskin, inducing a low estimate enough of all gregarious enjoyments, public meetings, and public dinners; and above all, those public choruses on Wilhelm's method, at Exeter Hall. What sympathy can We-by-ourselves-We have with Music for a Million? But the fit soon evaporates, when, looking into the garden, we see Theophilus Junior, that second edition of our own boyhood, in default of brothers or playmates, making a whole mob of himself, or at the least a troop of cavalry, commanding for the captain, huzzaing for the soldiers, blowing flourishes for the trumpeter, and even prancing, neighing, and snorting for all the horses! One dose of that joyous Socialism is a cure for our worst attack of the mopes. The truth is, an invalid's misanthropy is no more in earnest than the piety of the sick demon who wanted to be a monk, or the sentence about being weary of existence, to which Hypochondriasis puts a period with a Parr's Life Pill!

A more serious peril, from illness, concerns the temper. When the nerves are irritable, and the skin is irritable, and the stomach is irritable,—not to be irritable altogether is a

moral miracle; and especially in England, where, by one of the anomalies of the constitution, whilst a man cannot be tried twice for the same offence, his temper may be tried over and over again for no offence at all. Indeed, as our author says, "there are cases, and not a few, where an invalid's freedom from irritability is a merit of the highest order." For example, after soot in your gruel, tallow-grease in your barley-water, and snuff over your light pudding, to have "the draught as before" poured into your wakeful eyes, instead of your open mouth, by a drunken Mrs. Gamp, or one of her stamp. To check at such a moment the explosive speech, is at least equal to spiking a cannon in the heat of battle. There is beyond denial an ease to the chest, or somewhere, in a passionate objurgation—("Swear, my dear," said Fuseli to his wife, "it will relieve you")—so much so, that a certain invalid of our acquaintance, doubly afflicted with a painful complaint, and an unmanageable hard-mouthed temper, regularly retains, as helper to the sick nurse, a stone-deaf old woman, whom he can abuse without violence to her feelings.

How much better to have emulated the heavenly patience in sickness of which Woman—in spite of Job—has given the brightest examples:—Woman, who endures the severest trials, with a meekness and submission unheard of amongst men, the quaker excepted, who merely said, when his throat was being cut rather roughly—"Friend, thee dost haggle."

It must not be concealed, however, as regards irritability of temper in the sick room—there are faults on both sides—captious nurses as well as querulous nurselings. Cross-patches themselves, they willingly mistake the tones and accents of intolerable anguish, naturally sharp and hurried, for those of anger and impatience—and even accuse pain, in its

contortions, of making faces, and set up their backs at the random speeches of poor delirium! Then there are your lecturers, who preach patience in the very climax of a paroxysm, when the sermon can scarcely be heard, certainly not understood—as if a martyr, leaping mad with the toothache, could be calmed by reading to him the advertisement of the American Soothing Syrup! And then there is the she-dragon, who bullies the sufferer into comparative quiet! Not that the best of attendants is the smooth-tongued. Our invalid objects wisely to the sick being flattered, in season or out, with false hopes and views. As much panada, sago, or arrowroot as you please, but no flummery.

"Let the nurse avow that the medicine is nauseous. Let the physician declare that the treatment will be painful. Let sister, or brother, or friend, tell me that I must never look to be well. When the time approaches that I am to die, let me be told that I am to die, and when. If I encroach thoughtlessly on the time or strength of those about me, let me be reminded; if selfishly, let me be remonstrated with. Thus to speak the truth with love is in the power of us all."

And so say we. There is nothing worse for soul or body than the feverish agitation kept up by the struggle between external assurances and the internal conviction; for the mind will cling with forlorn pertinacity to the most desperate chance, like the sailor, who, when the ship was in danger of sinking, lashed himself to the sheet-anchor because it was the emblem of Hope. Till the truth is known there can be no calm of mind. It is only after he has abandoned all prospects of pardon or reprieve, that the capital convict sleeps soundly and dreams of green fields. So with ourselves: once satisfied that our case was beyond remedy, we gave up without reserve all dreams of future health and strength, and prepared, instead, to compete with that very able invalid who was able to be knocked down with a feather. Thence-

forward, free of those jarring vibrations between hope and fear, relieved from all tantalizing speculations on the weather's clearing up, our state has been one of comparative peace and ease. We would not give one of our Pectoral Lozenges to be told, we are looking better than a month ago—not a splinter of our broken crutch to be promised a new lease of life—a renewal of our youth like the eagle's! Such flatteries go in at one ear, the deaf one, and out at the other. We never shall be well again, till broken bones are mended with "soft sawder."

Are we, therefore, miserable, hypped, disconsolate? Answer, ye bookshelves, whence we draw the consolations of Philosophy, the dreams of Poetry and Romance,—the retrospections of History,—and glimpses of society from the better novels; mirth, comfort, and entertainment even for those small hours become so long from an unhealthy vigilance. Answer, ye pictures and prints, a Portrait Gallery of Nature!—and reply in your own tones, dear old fiddle, so often tuned to one favourite sadly-sweet air, and the words of Curran:—

"But since in wailing
There's nought availing,
But Death unfailing
Must strike the blow,
Then for this reason,
And for a season,
Let us be merry before we go!"

It is melancholy, doubtless, to retire in the prime of life, from the whole wide world, into the narrow prison of a sick room. How much worse if that room be a wretched garret, with the naked tiles above and the bare boards below—no swinging bookshelf—not a penny coloured print on the blank wall! And yet that forlorn attic is but the type of a more dreadful destitution, an unfurnished mind! The mother of

Bloomfield used to say, that to encounter Old Age, Winter, and Poverty, was like meeting three Giants; she might have added two more, as huge and terrible, Sickness and Ignorance—the last not the least of the Monster Evils; for it is he who affects pauperism with a deeper poverty—the beggary of the mind and soul.

"I have said how unavailing is luxury when the body is distressed and the spirit faint. At such times, and at all times, we cannot but be deeply grieved at the conception of the converse of our own state, at the thought of the multitude of poor suffering under privation, without the support and solace of great ideas. It is sad enough to think of them on a winter's night, aching with cold in every limb, and sunk as low as we in nerve and spirits, from their want of sufficient food. But this thought is supportable in cases where we may fairly hope that the greatest ideas are cheering them as we are cheered: that there is a mere set-off of their cold and hunger against our disease; and that we are alike inspired by spiritual vigour in the belief that our Father is with us,—that we are only encountering the probations of our pilgrimage,—that we have a divine work given us to carry out, now in pain and now in joy. There is comfort in the midst of the sadness and shame when we are thinking of the poor who can reflect and pray,—of the old woman who was once a punctual and eager attendant at church,—of the wasting child who was formerly a Sunday-scholar,—of the reduced gentleman or destitute student who retain the privilege of their humanity,—of 'looking before and after.' But there is no mitigation of the horror when we think of the savage poor, who form so large a proportion of the hungerers,—when we conceive of them suffering the privation of all good things at once,—suffering under the aching cold, the sinking hunger, the shivering nakedness,—without the respite or solace afforded by one inspiring or beguiling idea.

"I will not dwell on the reflection. A glimpse into this hell ought to suffice (though we, to whom imagery comes unbidden, and cannot be banished at will, have to bear much more than occasional glimpses); a glimpse ought to suffice to set all to work to procure for every one of these sufferers, bread and warmth, if possible, and as soon as possible; but above everything, and without the loss of an hour, an entrance upon their spiritual birthright. Every man and every woman, however wise and tender, appearing and designing to be, who for an hour helps to keep closed the entrance to the region of ideas,—who stands between sufferers and great thoughts, (which are the angels of consolation sent by God to all to whom he has given souls,) are, in so far, ministers of hell, not themselves inflicting torment, but intercepting the influences which would assuage or overpower

it. Let the plea be heard of us sufferers who know well the power of ideas,—our plea for the poor,—that, while we are contriving for all to be fed and cherished by food and fire, we may meanwhile kindle the immortal vitality within them, and give them that ethereal solace and sustenance which was meant to be shared by all, 'without money and without price.'"

Never, then, tell a man, permanently sick, that he will again be a perfect picture of health when he has not the frame for it—nor hint to a sick woman, incurably smitten, that the seeds of her disease will flourish and flower into lilies and roses. Why deter them from providing suitable pleasures and enjoyments to replace those delights of health and strength of which they must take leave for ever? Why not rather forewarn them of the Lapland Winter to which they are destined, and to trim their lamps spiritual for the darkness of a long seclusion? Tell them their doom, and let them prepare themselves for it, according to the essays before us, so healthy in tone, though invalid; so wholesome and salutary, though furnished from a sick room.

ALBUMS.

At the present day, when every fine lady has an equally fine album, and inexorably levies contributions from each of her fine acquaintance, it is dangerous to appear in the drawing-room, unless duly victualled and crammed with elaborately prepared impromptus, and carefully finished fragments, ready for adorning "the virgin page." (I *don't* mean the button-boy.) The fair one's good word for you may depend on your own *bon mot*, and a judicious *jeu d'esprit* may give

you a *locus standi* among the gownsfolk before all the senior wranglers of the season. You had better forget your card case, than your scrap case; and to be prepared with a new bit of scandal is less important than to be primed and loaded with a brilliant "pellet of the brain" for the album. If, however, you are too dull or too indolent to manufacture a scrap out of your own raw materials, you must "call up spirits from the vasty deep" of some needy author, who, for a consideration, will make them respond to the call. But be sure you get the entire copyright for your coin, and that the impromptu-seller does not supply a duplicate to some other dunce. I shall never forget the laugh of a lively young lady, on her showing to me the same poetical offering to her beautiful charms, laid upon her scriptorian altar, in different places, by divers worshippers, who, unknowingly to each other, had purchased the same goods at the same workshop, each inscribing it as born of his own spontaneous mother wit. But, as the young beauty remarked, who ever heard of *three* Minervas issuing, fully armed, from Jove's head? I remember the first verse ran thus:—

"Fair lady, when my hand you ask
Your album to embellish,
You offer a delightful task,
Apollo's self might relish."

My fair informant told me that one of the would-be-witty contributors happened to forget the fourth line. He was fairly stumped. In vain he bit the feather end of his goose-quill; the line had flown from his memory;—in vain he plunged his pen into the ink again and again, knuckle-deep; he only darkened his fingers, without enlightening his faculties. At last he was closing the book in despair, when his eye was caught by the gorgeous splendour of the red, green,

and gold cover,—a thought struck him,—he was suddenly inspired, and dashed off the really original line—

"'Tis *bound* uncommon swelliah."

Such an accidental bit of opportune inspiration may not always be your fortune; and therefore take care to get your scrap well by heart, so that every word shall flow currently and smoothly, without hitch or blot, from your fingers' ends.

There was once related to me another case of lapse of memory at the important moment. A rare album writer was in the constant habit of repeating over his intended impromptu addresses to the fair this, or charming that, while shaving himself at his glass. On one occasion the album was presented to him, but alas! it was in vain he had made ready, for he could not fire—he had forgotten his couplets. The barrel was charged, but the leaden contents remained as harmlessly quiet as wet gunpowder. What was to be done to restore suspended animation? He feigns sudden illness, retires to another room, gets a servant to bring him warm water and a razor, and prepares for a shave. The experiment is quite successful; for no sooner does the glass reflect his face in a lather, than his memory revives, and the lost effusion is recovered. This was but an awkward piece of business after all; and I should say, if you *must* have some association to fix your memory, avoid making that association with a razor, lest some day or other you chance to cut a ridiculous figure.

The old adage, that we may judge of the character of another by the character of his or her associates, with some exceptions—and no rule is without exceptions—applies to an album, whose contents generally form a tolerably correct

index of the peculiar society and character of its possessor. Men do not gather grapes of thorns, and we should scarcely find the album of a she-Friend seasoned with any spicy morsel about love or wine, of the flavour of Anacreon or Tom Moore. As well might we expect to hear, "Friend of my soul this goblet sip," sung in full chorus by a Quaker congregation in a meeting-house. A Friend's scraps are for the most part peculiarly characteristic. One spinster of pallid complexion and petulant temper, who dwelt in the street called Whitecross, is said to have obtained from a Friend on the eve of his departure to Bombay the following :—

"For export to India no ale can be fitter
Than thee Betsy Butt, thou 'rt so pale and so bitter.
"Thy friend,
"OBADIAH HOGG."

This was no flattery. It was decidedly uncivil towards Miss Butt, who, however, ought to have known better than expect wit or good manners from a hogshead more accustomed to pale ale than politeness.

Professional jokes in a lady's album are generally outrageous violations of all propriety. They are frequently not understood, or misunderstood, or unappreciated by the fair one, who usually prefers, to the most pointed of such witticisms, any jingle, how lackadaisycal soever it may be, about eyes and flies, hearts and darts, dove and love, single and mingle, arms, charms, kisses, blisses, willing, thrilling, billing, killing, &c., &c., &c.

One young lady, who had recently taken Father Mathew's pledge, was entirely horrified when I translated for her a prescription, which a rattle-brained medical student of Guy's

had written in her album, gravely assuring her that it was an excellent tonic: it was as follows:—

"℞. Vini adusti fl: ℥viij
Potûs e sacharo confecti fl: ℥xi
Sacchari ℥viij
Succi mal. cit. fl: ℥iij
Mal. cit. corticis ℥iv
Aq. ferv. fl: ℥xij

"Misce. cap. cochlearia magna octodecem post prandium, et cochlearia magna viginti hora somni.

"Pumilio Obesus, M.D."

But of all professional jokers the legal witlings are the worst, as well in an album, as everywhere else; and yet there is no class of professionals more incurably possessed with the vicious spirit of joke-trying than the lawyers, whether nisi-prius tourists, or those equity "*Wigs* whom Bruce has often led." Their quasi jests are for the most part too shallow to get above low-water mark; they are usually poor conceits, and mostly wretched puns, bearing about the same proportion to true wit, as a disciple of Father Mathew does to a choice spirit. As surely as Doe rhymes with Roe, so surely is the close of a lawyer's conversational wit bounded on all sides thereof by a defenceless pun. An instance was afforded at the late turnpike trials at Cardiff, when one of the learned limbs triumphantly asked, "What would become of the gates without a *Bar?*"

As a specimen of the long-robe style of album-inscription, I extract a scrap by a young member of Lincoln's Inn:

"That satin dress,
Which you possess,
Makes me to observe, Miss Brown,
That 't will be said
When we are wed,
Jack Jones has got a silk gown."

I suppose it was because Mr. Jones' law was no better than his lyrics, that he never received Her Majesty's patent to plead "in silk attire;" and Miss Brown, as well as the Queen, entirely disdained all association with such stuff.

The scarcest autographs in a lady's album are the fox-hunter's. Accustomed to "witch the world with noble horsemanship," he scorns such a feeble, pitiful mode of bewitching the fair as that of scrap scribbling. He and his leathers understand a cover of quite another sort than gay morocco binding. We would give a specimen of his hand; but that neither industry, nor chance, nor an intimate acquaintance with Melton Mowbray, has yet thrown one in our way. If he ever dies for love, like the fox he dies mute.

REVIEW.

A Christmas Carol.—In Prose. By Charles Dickens.

If Christmas, with its ancient and hospitable customs, its social and charitable observances, were in danger of decay, this is the book that would give them a new lease. The very name of the author predisposes one to the kindlier feelings; and a peep at the Frontispiece sets the animal spirits capering at once along with Mr. Fizziwig at his Benthamite Ball, in his warehouse adapted to the greatest happiness of the greatest number. If ever Comfort was personified, there she is, dancing with Hospitality in a white waistcoat, and close beside her the domesticated Robin Redbreast, transformed for the occasion into a little boy.

His coat is blue, indeed, instead of brown; but you can swear to him notwithstanding—to the cock of his bill and the cut of his tail, and to the hop that he will give when his turn comes!

It was a blessed inspiration that put such a book into the head of Charles Dickens; a happy inspiration of the heart, that warms every page. It is impossible to read, without a glowing bosom and burning cheeks, between love and shame for our kind, with perhaps a little touch of misgiving, whether we are not personally open, a crack or so, to the reproach of Wordsworth,

> "The world is too much with us, early and late,
> Getting and spending."

Whether our own heads have not become more inaccessible, our hearts more impregnable, our ears and eyes more dull and blind, to sounds and sights of human misery; if our Charity altogether is not too much of a Clari, thinking of Home, home, home, and no place but home. In a word, whether we have not grown *Scroogey?*

"Oh! but he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shrivelled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue; and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice. A frosty rime was on his head, and on his eyebrows, and his wiry chin. He carried his own low temperature always about with him; he iced his office in the dog-days, and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas.

"External heat and cold had little influence on Scrooge. No warmth could warm, no wintry weather chill him. No wind that blew was bitterer than he, no falling snow was more intent upon its purpose, no pelting rain less open to intreaty. Foul weather didn't know where to have him. The heaviest rain, and snow, and hail, and sleet, could boast of the advantage over him in only one respect. They often 'came down' handsomely, and Scrooge never did.

"Nobody ever stopped him in the street to say, with gladsome looks, 'My dear Scrooge, how are you? when will you come to see me?' No beggars implored him to bestow a trifle, no children asked him what it was o'clock, no man or woman ever once in all his life inquired the way to such and such a place, of Scrooge. Even the blindmen's dogs appeared to know him; and when they saw him coming on, would tug their owners into doorways and up courts; and then would wag their tails as though they said, 'no eye at all is better than an evil eye, dark master!'

"But what did Scrooge care? It was the very thing he liked. To edge his way along the crowded paths of life, warning all human sympathy to keep its distance, was what the knowing ones call 'nuts' to Scrooge."

Yes, *screw-nuts*. There was a figure to sit busy in his counting-house, as unmoved as a calculating machine, on the very threshold of Hilarity Term, that is to say on Christmas Eve! On that gracious Eve when knocking at every door and every hearts' door in gospel-lighted lands the gentle Spirit of Christianity craves admittance, not to chide or rebuke, but to cheer, to comfort, to pardon, to redeem—to bless the lintel and the hearth, the bed and the board, and to play with the little children! There was a man, to be visited by that divine Spirit, or by Charity and Mercy, who called on him in human shape.

"They were portly gentlemen, pleasant to behold, and now stood, with their hats off, in Scrooge's office. They had books and papers in their hands, and bowed to him.

"'Scrooge and Marley's, I believe,' said one of the gentlemen, referring to his list. 'Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge, or Mr. Marley?'

"'Mr. Marley has been dead these seven years,' Scrooge replied. 'He died seven years ago, this very night.'

"'We have no doubt his liberality is well represented by his surviving partner,' said the gentleman, presenting his credentials.

"It certainly was; for they had been two kindred spirits. At the ominous word 'liberality,' Scrooge frowned, and shook his head, and handed back the credentials.

"'At this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge,' said the gentleman, taking up a pen, 'it is more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the poor and destitute, who suffer greatly at the

present time. Many thousands are in want of common necessaries; hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, sir.'

"'Are there no prisons?' asked Scrooge.

"'Plenty of prisons,' said the gentleman, laying down the pen again.

"'And the Union workhouses?' demanded Scrooge, 'Are they still in operation?'

"'They are. Still,' returned the gentleman, 'I wish I could say they were not.'

"'The Treadmill and the Poor Law are in full vigour, then?' said Scrooge.

"'Both very busy, sir.'

"'Oh! I was afraid, from what you said at first, that something had occurred to stop them in their useful course,' said Scrooge. 'I am very glad to hear it.'

"'Under the impression that they scarcely furnish Christian cheer of mind or body to the multitude,' returned the gentleman, 'a few of us are endeavouring to raise a fund to buy the poor some meat and drink, and means of warmth. We choose this time, because it is a time, of all others, when Want is keenly felt, and Abundance rejoices. What shall I put you down for?'

"'Nothing!' Scrooge replied.

"'You wish to be anonymous?'

"'I wish to be left alone,' said Scrooge. 'Since you ask me what I wish, gentlemen, that is my answer. I don't make merry myself at Christmas, and I can't afford to make idle people merry. I help to support the establishments I have mentioned; they cost enough: and those who are badly off must go there.'

"'Many can't go there; and many would rather die.'

"'If they would rather die,' said Scrooge, 'they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population. Besides—excuse me—I don't know that.'

"'But you might know it,' observed the gentleman.

"'It's not my business,' Scrooge returned. 'It's enough for a man to understand his own business, and not to interfere with other people's. Mine occupies me constantly. Good afternoon, gentlemen!'

"Seeing clearly that it would be useless to pursue their point, the gentlemen withdrew. Scrooge resumed his labours with an improved opinion of himself, and in a more facetious temper than was usual with him."

But perhaps by degrees, as the advent of the Holy Day drew nearer and nearer, the miser's misanthropy thawed, his temper mended, and his temperature rose to blood heat: no,

not a fibre, or a nerve—not one moral degree, above the freezing point. He kept hardening and stiffening with the weather.

"Foggier yet, and colder! Piercing, searching, biting cold. If the good Saint Dunstan had but nipped the Evil Spirit's nose with a touch of such weather as that, instead of using his familiar weapons, then, indeed, he would have roared to lusty purpose. The owner of one scant young nose, gnawed and mumbled by the hungry cold as bones are gnawed by dogs, stooped down at Scrooge's keyhole to regale him with a Christmas carol: but at the first sound of,—

'God bless you merry gentleman!
May nothing you dismay!'

Scrooge seized the ruler with such energy of action, that the singer fled in terror, leaving the keyhole to the fog and even more congenial frost.

"At length the hour of shutting up the counting-house arrived. With an ill-will Scrooge dismounted from his stool, and tacitly admitted the fact to the expectant clerk in the tank, who instantly snuffed his candle out, and put on his hat.

"'You'll want all day to-morrow, I suppose?' said Scrooge.

"'If quite convenient, Sir.'

"'It's not convenient,' said Scrooge, 'and it's not fair. If I was to stop half-a-crown for it, you'd think yourself ill-used, I'll be bound?'

"The clerk smiled faintly.

"'And yet,' said Scrooge, 'you don't think *me* ill-used, when I pay a day's wages for no work.'

"The clerk observed that it was only once a year.

"'A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December!' said Scrooge, buttoning his great-coat to the chin. 'But I suppose you must have the whole day. Be here all the earlier next morning!'

"The clerk promised that he would; and Scrooge walked out with a growl. The office was closed in a twinkling, and the clerk, with the long ends of his white comforter dangling below his waist (for he boasted no great-coat), went down a slide on Cornhill, at the end of a lane of boys, twenty times in honour of its being Christmas-eve, and then ran home to Camden Town as hard as he could pelt, to play at blindman's-buff."

Poor fellow! And yet, compared with his master, he was as bright as the clerk that goes out "like winkin," on a piece of burnt paper. He had a spark of soul in him at any rate.

And poor as he was, there was a happy, aye and a merry Christmas before him; and a dinner we would rather have dined with, than with Duke Humphrey—certainly no ancestor of the alderman of that ilk. First, a Christmas picture.

"The house fronts looked black enough, and the windows blacker, contrasting with the smooth white sheet of snow upon the roofs, and with the dirtier snow upon the ground; which last deposit had been ploughed up in deep furrows by the heavy wheels of carts and waggons; furrows that crossed and re-crossed each other hundreds of times where the great streets branched off, and made intricate channels, hard to trace, in the thick yellow mud and icy water. The sky was gloomy, and the shortest streets were choked up with a dingy mist, half thawed half frozen, whose heavier particles descended in a shower of sooty atoms, as if all the chimneys in Great Britain had, by one consent, caught fire, and were blazing away to their dear hearts' content. There was nothing very cheerful in the climate or the town, and yet was there an air of cheerfulness abroad, that the clearest summer air and brightest summer sun might have endeavoured to diffuse in vain. For the people who were shovelling away on the house-tops were jovial and full of glee; calling out to one another from the parapets, and now and then exchanging a facetious snowball—better-natured missile far than many a wordy jest—laughing heartily if it went right, and not less heartily if it went wrong. The poulterers' shops were still half open, and the fruiterers' were radiant in their glory. There were great round pot-bellied baskets of chesnuts, shaped like the waistcoats of jolly old gentlemen, lolling at the doors, and tumbling out into the street in their apoplectic opulence. There were ruddy, brown-faced, broad-girthed Spanish onions, shining in the fatness of their growth, like Spanish Friars; and winking from their shelves, in wanton slyness, at the girls as they went by and glanced demurely at the hung-up misletoe. There were pears and apples, clustered high in blooming pyramids; there were bunches of grapes, made, in the shop-keeper's benevolence, to dangle from conspicuous hooks, that people's mouths might water gratis as they passed; there were piles of filberts, mossy and brown, recalling, in their fragrance, ancient walks among the woods, and pleasant shufflings, ancle deep, through withered leaves; there were Norfolk Biffins, squab and swarthy, setting off the yellow of the oranges and lemons, and, in the great compactness of their juicy persons, urgently entreating and beseeching to be carried home in paper bags and eaten after dinner. The very gold and silver fish, set forth among these choice fruits in a bowl, though members of a dull and stagnant-blooded race, appeared to know that there was something going on; and, to a fish, went gasping round and round their

little world in slow and passionless excitement. The Grocers'! oh, the Grocers'! nearly closed, with perhaps two shutters down, or one; but through those gaps such glimpses! It was not alone that the scales, descending on the counter, made a merry sound, or that the twine and roller parted company so briskly, or that the canisters were rattled up and down like juggling tricks, or even that the blended scents of tea and coffee were so grateful to the nose, or even that the raisins were so plentiful and rare, the almonds so extremely white, the sticks of cinnamon so long and so straight, the other spices so delicious, the candied fruits so caked and spotted with molten sugar, as to make the coldest lookers-on feel faint and subsequently bilious. Nor was it that the figs were moist and pulpy, or that the French plums blushed in modest tartness from their highly decorated boxes, or that everything was good to eat and in its Christmas dress: but the customers were all so hurried and so eager in the hopeful promise of the day, that they tumbled up against each other at the door, clashing their wicker baskets wildly, and left their purchases upon the counter, and came running back to fetch them, and committed hundreds of the like mistakes in the best humour possible; while the Grocer and his people were so frank and fresh that the polished hearts with which they fastened their aprons behind, might have been their own, worn outside for general inspection, and for Christmas daws to peck at if they chose."

Now for the dinner; enough to make the mouth of a stone cherub water, like a fountain.

"'Why, where's our Martha?' cried Bob Cratchit looking round.

"'Not coming,' said Mrs. Cratchit.

"'Not coming!' said Bob, with a sudden declension in his high spirits; for he had been Tim's blood-horse all the way from church, and had come home rampant. 'Not coming upon Christmas Day!'

"Martha didn't like to see him disappointed, if it were only in joke; so she came out prematurely from behind the closet door, and ran into his arms, while the two young Cratchits hustled Tiny Tim, and bore him off into the wash-house, that he might hear the pudding singing in the copper.

"'And how did little Tim behave?' asked Mrs. Cratchit, when she had rallied Bob on his credulity, and Bob had hugged his daughter to his heart's content.

"'As good as gold,' said Bob, 'and better. Somehow he gets thoughtful sitting by himself so much, and thinks the strangest things you ever heard. He told me, coming home, that he hoped the people saw him in the church, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remember, upon Christmas Day, who made lame beggars walk and blind men see.'

"Bob's voice was tremulous when he told them this, and trembled more

when he said that Tiny Tim was growing strong and hearty. His active little crutch was heard upon the floor, and back came Tiny Tim before another word was spoken, escorted by his brother and sister to his stool beside the fire; and while Bob, turning up his cuffs—as if, poor fellow, they were capable of being made more shabby—compounded some hot mixture in a jug with gin and lemons, and stirred it round and round and put it on the hob to simmer; Master Peter and the two ubiquitous young Cratchits went to fetch the goose, with which they soon returned in high procession. Such a bustle ensued that you might have thought a goose the rarest of all birds; a feathered phenomenon, to which a black swan was a matter of course: and in truth it was something very like it in that house. Mrs. Cratchit made the gravy (ready beforehand in a little saucepan) hissing hot; Master Peter mashed the potatoes with incredible vigour; Miss Belinda sweetened up the apple-sauce; Martha dusted the hot plates; Bob took Tiny Tim beside him in a tiny corner at the table; the two young Cratchits set chairs for everybody, not forgetting themselves, and mounting guard upon their posts, crammed spoons into their mouths, lest they should shriek for goose before their turn came to be helped. At last the dishes were set on, and grace was said. It was succeeded by a breathless pause, as Mrs. Cratchit, looking slowly all along the carving-knife, prepared to plunge it in the breast; but when she did, and when the long expected gush of stuffing issued forth, one murmur of delight arose all round the board, and even Tiny Tim, excited by the two young Cratchits, beat on the table with the handle of his knife, and feebly cried Hurrah! There never was such a goose. Bob said he didn't believe there ever was such a goose cooked. Its tenderness and flavour, size and cheapness, were the themes of universal admiration. Eked out by the apple-sauce and mashed potatoes, it was a sufficient dinner for the whole family; indeed, as Mrs Cratchit said with great delight (surveying one small atom of a bone upon the dish), they hadn't ate it all at last! Yet everyone had had enough, and the youngest Cratchits in particular were steeped in sage and onion to the eyebrows! But now, the plates being changed by Miss Belinda, Mrs. Cratchit left the room alone—too nervous to bear witnesses—to take the pudding up, and bring it in. Suppose it should not be done enough! Suppose it should break in turning out! Suppose somebody should have got over the wall of the back-yard, and stolen it, while they were merry with the goose: a supposition at which the two young Cratchits became livid! All sorts of horrors were supposed. Hallo! A great deal of steam! The pudding was out of the copper. A smell like a washing-day! That was the cloth. A smell like an eating-house and a pastry-cook's next door to each other, with a laundress's next door to that! That was the pudding. In half a minute Mrs. Cratchit entered: flushed, but smiling proudly: with the pudding, like a speckled cannon-ball, so hard and firm, blazing in half of half-a-quartern of ignited brandy, and be-

dight with Christmas holly stuck into the top. Oh, a wonderful pudding! Bob Cratchit said, and calmly too, that he regarded it as the greatest success achieved by Mrs. Cratchit since their marriage. Mrs. Cratchit said that now the weight was off her mind, she would confess she had had her doubts about the quantity of flour. Everybody had something to say about it, but nobody said or thought it was at all a small pudding for a large family. It would have been flat heresy to do so. Any Cratchit would have blushed to hint at such a thing. At last the dinner was all done, the cloth was cleared, the hearth swept, and the fire made up. The compound in the jug being tasted and considered perfect, apples and oranges were put upon the table, and a shovel-full of chesnuts on the fire. Then all the Cratchit family drew round the hearth, in what Bob Cratchit called a circle, meaning half a one: and at Bob Cratchit's elbow stood the family display of glass; two tumblers and a custard-cup without a handle. These held the hot stuff from the jug, however, as well as golden goblets would have done; and Bob served it out with beaming looks, while the chesnuts on the fire sputtered and crackled noisily. Then Bob proposed:

"'A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us!'

"Which all the family re-echoed.

"'God bless us every one!' said Tiny Tim, the last of all.

"He sat very close to his father's side, upon his little stool. Bob held his withered little hand in his, as if he loved the child, and wished to keep him by his side, and dreaded that he might be taken from him."

What a party in a parlour—and all blest! But how did Scrooge the miser spend his Christmas Day?—how did he get over his twenty-fifth of December? Of course in his office, gloating over that gloomy composition, with only half a plum in it, his ledger. Not so: he never even looked into his banker's book to check the balance. He dressed hastily in all his best, and sallied into the street, walking with his hands behind him, exchanging greetings with beggars! patting children on the head!! and smiling blandly and kindly on every body he passed!!! Nay, he actually hurried his steps to meet that very Charity (disguised as a stout gentleman) whom he had repulsed so rudely the evening before.

"He had not gone far, when coming on towards him he beheld the portly gentleman who had walked into his counting-house the day before, and said, 'Scrooge and Marley's, I believe?' It sent a pang across his

heart to think how this old gentleman would look upon him when they met; but he knew what path lay straight before him, and he took it.

"'My dear sir,' said Scrooge, quickening his pace, and taking the old gentleman by both his hands. 'How do you do? I hope you succeeded yesterday. It was very kind of you. A Merry Christmas to you sir!'

"'Mr. Scrooge?'

"'Yes,' said Scrooge, 'that is my name, and I fear it may not be pleasant to you. Allow me to ask your pardon. And will you have the goodness'—here Scrooge whispered in his ear.

"'Lord bless me!' cried the gentleman, as if his breath were gone. 'My dear Mr. Scrooge, are you serious?'

"'If you please,' said Scrooge; 'not a farthing less. A great many back payments are included in it, I assure you. Will you do me that favour?'

"'My dear sir,' said the other, shaking hands with him; 'I don't know what to say to such munifi—'

"'Don't say anything, please,' retorted Scrooge. 'Come and see me. Will you come and see me?'

"'I will!' cried the old gentleman. And it was clear he meant to do it."

There's a change!—a moral trick of metamorphosis as astounding as any mechanical one in the Christmas Pantomimes!—the parish cage into a Refuge for the Destitute—Newgate into the Philanthropic—a Pawnbroker into a Samaritan—a Scrooge into a Samaritan!—a Nero overnight, a Titus in the morning!

"But he was early at the office next morning. Oh he was early there. If he could only be there first, and catch Bob Cratchit coming late! That was the thing he had set his heart upon.

"And he did it; yes he did! The clock struck nine. No Bob. A quarter past. No Bob. He was full eighteen minutes and a half behind his time. Scrooge sat with his door wide open, that he might see him come into the Tank.

"His hat was off before he opened the door; his comforter too. He was on his stool in a jiffy; driving away with his pen, as if he were trying to overtake nine o'clock.

"'Hallo!' growled Scrooge, in his accustomed voice, as near as he could feign it. 'What do you mean by coming here at this time of day?

"'I'm very sorry, sir,' said Bob, 'I *am* behind my time.'

"'You are?' repeated Scrooge; 'yes, I think you are. Step this way, if you please.'

"'It's only once a year, sir,' pleaded Bob, appearing from the Tank: 'it shall not be repeated; I was making rather merry yesterday, sir.'

"'Now, I'll tell you what, my friend,' said Scrooge, 'I am not going to stand this sort of thing any longer. And, therefore,' he continued, leaping from his stool, and giving Bob such a dig in the waistcoat that he staggered back into the Tank again: 'and, therefore, I am about to raise your salary!'

"Bob trembled, and got a little nearer to the ruler. He had a momentary idea of knocking Scrooge down with it; holding him, and calling to the people in the court for help and a strait-waistcoat.

"'A Merry Christmas, Bob!' said Scrooge, with an earnestness that could not be mistaken, as he clapped him on the back. 'A merrier Christmas, Bob, my good fellow, than I have given you for many a year! I'll raise your salary, and endeavour to assist your struggling family, and we will discuss your affairs this very afternoon over a Christmas bowl of smoking bishop, Bob!'"

If that is not the most wonderful Bowl of Bishop ever promised—the most marvellous promise ever made—there is nothing Extraordinary in this world except an occasional Gazette! How the miraculous change was effected (if not exactly by Faith, Hope, and Charity), by what spiritual Trio (not Gin, Rum, and Brandy) the Worldly Wiseman was converted into a Christian, must be unriddled by the book itself; and haply there shall come a change over the reader also in its perusal. Ours is rather a selfish, luxurious age. "The world *is* too much with us"—there is a cold calculating utilitarianism, far too much of the hard harsh spirit of the money-grubber, who, being asked if he had ever done a good action in his life, replied, "Yes—he once detected a woman in a sham fit."

AN IRISH REBELLION.

IT is impossible to divine for what reason all mention of the outbreak alluded to in the following letter has been suppressed in the daily papers of either kingdom; but whatever may have been the purpose of the journalists, the Rebellion described is, in the phrase of the *Times*, "A Great Fact." —*Ed.*

"*To Miss* * * * * * * *Shrewsbury, Shropshire.*

"MY DEAR JANE,

"This cums hopin your well and cumfortable, which is more then I am or ever hope to be in this distracted country. Lord forgive me for repinin. But I wish I had married any wheres except to the Emerald Jem. My nerves is litterally shook to peaces, for won mite as well xpect to sleep in Sow Ameriky without Rockin by erthquakes, as to live in Ireland without Agitashuns. Its always in Convulshuns like a teething Babby!

"Sich mobbins & publick meetins, & violent speechifyins witch encourages murderin English, & marchins & counter marchins, & bonfires without Guys to them—& blowin Horns, & Irish thretnin letters from men as cant rite to men as cant read. Sich squablings between Repeelers & No Repeelers, & Romans & Protestants, and exclusiv dealin, not like Mrs. Mullins at wist as used to deal all the Honners to herself, but not byin nuthin from noboddy except your own perswashun. Sich searchin for Harms & many factering Pikes and Repeel Wardins, & callin hard names, big Beggers, & mity big liers, and a surplus of rough uns, and a lion in

blood Langwage & religun,—and as they've bilt a grate Hall for Irish Concilliashun there will be fighten of course. In witch case Lord help us, for when it comes to Battle royal, an Irish Justis always throws up his commission & his Hat along with it rayther then keep the peace! O Jane never never never marry into Ireland. Singleness is better than Dublin.

"Thank goodness I'me not a Saxon but from Shropsheer, or my days wouldn't be long in the Land. Wat the Saxons has dun to displease the Irish xcept desertin from Boney at the Battle of Lipsick is more then I know, but they are as bitter as Bark agin the hole race. This very blessid mornin there was poor Patrick Maguire the tailor was shillallid amost into nine parts of a man for only havin a peace of cloth in his winder marked Saxony superfine. Its shockin to stir up sich nashunal anymositties between cristians. For my own part altho I am a English woman I dont hate Ireland and indeed was once quite attached to the country being stuck fast up to my middle in a Bog.

"Then theres party cullers. Some of them runnin as mad at Orange as a bull at scarlet, because King William of Orange was a Dutchman and wanted to introdeuce Hollands instid of Wisky. And so they must upset poor Widder Grady & her baskit into the gutter for sellin Oranges instied of Greens & others agin cant abide Green—so you cant even suit your complexion xcept by goin in Newtral Tint like a Quaker. But that cums of leaving my own country for an Island surrounded as I may say with hot Warter and witch sum mornin I may get up and find repeeled off to the Continent and a next to France. Or wats wus simpathisin off to Ameriky. But before sich a repeel I hope I shall be Repeeld to my grave! As may be I may be—eithir pitch forkt to deth by a Protistant rebel or shot by a Poppish one with a barrelful of slugs. But who can expect behaving as

armless as Doves as Doctor Watts says in a country where a Pigeon House means a place full of sogers.

"As to my Husband insted of bein a cumfit in my allarms hes quite the Reverse, wat with his repeel pollytics & his Irish blud which is so easy set up he never goes out to spend an evenin & meet his frends but I look to see him cum home with a black eye or a pugnashus Nose,—if he ant sent sudden to heaven with a holy Head. Witch is rather alarmin for if thats his Friendship wat will his love be if it ever cums to Blows. Praps its sumthing in the soil for they do say you may no a real Irish tater by its havin black eyes. How sumever fighten & shillallyin is meat & drink to the Natives. But its his pollyticks as scars me out of my sensis. O if you could only hear him talk of goin to the Skaffold as he will sum day, without his Hod—& crackin every Crown in the Wurld, for the cause of Irish poverty he says is soverins raining over it, in short sich speeches as must be Ketchd up, for State Persecutions, if luckly there wasnt so menny all talking in the same stile, for Strong languige is one of their weaknesses. And witch is why they praps want to have a Parliment of their own, for as to the Hous of Communs they say theres nothin Irish about it xcept a Speaker as dont speak. And so I supose they will have a Parliment in Collige Green, or else the Fifteen Akers witch is a better Place to pair off in. For you know theyre dredful Duelists & always so reddy for challengin, if you only look hard at a deaf Irishman he considders it a callin out. Not but wat theyre a generus Pepel otherways as well as in fighting and would give away their last Rap in the wurld wether in munny or a stick, & whether a stick with a stick or with a pike. And I must say very gallant to the sects, even poor Thady when he's overcum by his Licker and sees dubble, Oh Nelly, says he, its a trate entirely it is to see two of your swate purty

Faces insted of one. Witch is all very well in the way of complementin but whats it all Wuth when it cums to Pollyticks if he wants to repuddiate me like an Amerikan Det, and repeel all Unions between the English & the Irish. But a Marrige is a Marrige, & nayther him nor Mister O Daniel O Connel with Mr. Ray and Mr. Steel into the Bargin can get quit of three Axes & the Halter. Witch reminds me of the prejudis agin English males, I mean to say the Crole Coaches. Wat I suspects they wants is busses to jine on to their Blunders. For theres shockin reports about a Genral risin with the lark some mornin in the disturbed distrix. I supose the Peep o'day Boys, & sum plot gettin up. There certainly has been seizers of arms, & sum talk of Rebecca cummin over to giv lessons in levellin 'Pikes, & they do say theres an unkommun stickin of Pigs by way of practisin for civil War. Likewise Rock letters, & as to land you mite as well take Leasis of the Goodwin Sands. There is poor Patrick Dolan, but I must call him Pat in futer for they've burnt his rick. Well he's as good as killd, for he's a prescribed man. And all for wat? Why for havin a cow as wouldn't toss up with the Procter for the Tithes. To be shure as Thady says there's a Commisshun appinted to enquire how Irishmen hold their own, But wats the use of a Commisshun to inquire out wat we all know beforehand namely that if so be every farmer in Ireland gives up his farm, the only Tennant left will be the Lord Left-tenant.

"What a friteful state of Things! Propperty not safe nor life nayther for if your killd the murderer always gets an Irish allibi witch is being in two other Places at the time. No law—no justis—no nothing. And in such an age as ours for all sorts of larning. Looking from England at Ireland, who would believe he sees the Eighteenth sentry enlitened by Gas? But sumboddy's cum—Sergent Flanigan.

"O Janc, wat news for the poor Ile of Hearin! I ort to say hes a Sergent in the Cunstabulabulary Force and as sich knows every thing—& he says there's a breaking out at sum place that begins with Killin; its only a small Villige, but you know very bad erupshuns begins with little spots. I was too flurrid to ketch the particlers, but theres a reglar rebellion, & Lord nose how many thowsand Irish all harmed with sithes a-going to take the field. And theyre to take Dublin & to plow up the Fenix Park & repeal King Williams statute, & raise the Pigeon House down to the ground. In short he says the Police apprehends every thing thats bad. Theres news and Thady not come home yet! If he jines the disinfected I shall be misrable. I must go and look up Thady, so Adeu in haste,

"Your luving Sister,

"ELLINOR * * * *."

"P.S. Thady is just come in dredfully up in his spirrits, witch confirms the truth. He is as close as wax tho about it, & only says its a grate Day for Ireland, but theres rebelling in his very looks, & the way he wistles & snaps his fingers, and walks up & down the room like Marchin & keeping step. He longs & means he does to jine in the skrimmage, & lord help him if he does wether he gets shot or slashed or took Prisonner for the Law nevar spares Inn Serjeants. If he does jine them I shall go mad. But wat am I to do for hes as willful & hobstinate as an Irish Pig, witch wont be driv in the right road & witch makes their Pork so dangerus to eat its so apt to go the wrong way.

"P.S.S. More allarms! Sich drummins & fifing, and trumpiting, and prancing of horses, & rumblin of cannons, And Thady rubbing his hands & grinning & looking happy enuff to drive one delirius! O Jane, never marry into a civil

warring Fammily! And wats wus, he wont listen to a janting Car to go off with tho we're sitting as I may say on Barrils of Gunpowder & red hot Pokers!"

No. II.

From the same to the same.

"DEAR JANE,

"This is to say I am safe & well. No thenks to the Rebeling for the very day after I rit my last it broke out. But Guvernment having had timely notis the Millitary was all Mustard, and very strong. And no dout would have committed dredful slorter of the pore miss guided cretures, if they hadn't been misgided themselves by a traterus wretch as undertook to lead them the rite road. Insted of witch he led them clean contrary into a peacable common full of geese & asses so that nothin actionable took place xcept givin the guide a sound floggin. If the sogers had quarterd him on the spot it would have served him rite, But thenk Provedins wat was ment for our ruin was our preservin! It seems wen the rebbels come to Donny Brook they halted & drew up in order of Battel for a fite with the troops witch in course did not arive. You may gudge how that tride their Irish tempers & in partickler in such a famus spot for fiting and connected with Shillallyin Associations ever since the creation. So after waitin as long as they could & no signs of a skrimmage till their patience was wore out entirely with the disappintment, the Rebbels fell a fiting among themselves, the rite wing agin the left, & then both jining together atackt the center boddy & gave each other sich routs & got so

dissipated that they quite defeated themselves, and so there's an end of the Irish Rebellion. Praise goodness Thady wasn't there, having a Job on a house top, and I took away the ladder.

"I am, dear Susan,
"Your loving Sister,
"ELLINOR * * * *."

A SONG FOR THE MILLION.

ON WILHELM'S METHOD.

THERE'S a Music aloft in the air
As if Cherubs were humming a song,
Now it's high, now it's low, here and there,
There's a Harmony floating along!
While the steeples are loud in their joy,
To the tune of the bells' ring-a-ding,
Let us chime in a peal, one and all,
For we all should be able to sing
Hullahbaloo!

We are Chartists, Destructives and rogues,
We are Radicals, Tories, and Whigs,
We are Churchmen, Dissenters, what not,
We are asses, curs, monkeys and pigs,
But in spite of the slanderous names
Partisans on each other will fling.
Tho' in concord we cannot agree,
Yet we all in a chorus may sing
Hullahbaloo!

We may not have a happy New Year,
Be perplex'd by all possible ills—
Find the bread and the meat very dear,
And be troubled with very *hard bills*—
Yet like linnets, cock-robins and wrens,
Larks, and nightingales joyous in Spring,
Or the finches saluting their hens,
Sure we all should be able to sing
Hullahbaloo!

We may have but a Lilliput purse,
And the change in the purse very small,
And our notes may not pass at the Bank,
But they're current at Exeter Hall!
Then a fig for foul weather and fogs!
And whatever Misfortune may bring,
If we go to the dogs—like the dogs
In a pack we are able to sing
Hullahbaloo!

Though the coat may be worn with a badge—
Or the kerchief no prize for a prig—
Or the shirt never sent to the wash—
There's the Gamut for little and big!
O then come, rich and poor, young and old,
For of course it's a very fine thing,
Spite of Misery, Hunger, and cold,
That we all are so able to sing
Hullahbaloo!

There are Demons to worry the rich,
There are monsters to torture the poor,

There's the Worm that will gnaw at the heart,
There's the Wolf that will come to the door!
We may even be short of the cash
For the tax to a queen or a king,
And the broker may sell off our beds,
But we still shall be able to sing
Hullabaloo!

There's Consumption to wither the weak,
There are fevers that humble the stout—
A disease may be rife with the young,
Or a pestilence walking about—
Desolation may visit our hives,
And old Death's metaphorical sting
May dispose of the dearest of wives,
But we all shall be able to sing
Hullahbaloo!

We may farm at a very high rent,
And with guano manure an inch deep,
We may sow, whether broadcast or drill,
And have only the whirlwind to reap;
All our corn may be spoil'd in the ear,
And our barns be ignited by Swing,
And our sheep may die off with the rot,
But we all shall be able to sing
Hullahbaloo!

Our acquaintance may cut us direct,
Even Love may become rather cold,
And a friend of our earlier years
May look shy at the coat that is old:

We may not have a twig or a straw,
Not a reed where affection may cling,
Not a dog for our love, or a cat,
But we still shall be able to sing,
Hullahbaloo!

Some are pallid with watching and want,
Some are burning with blushes of shame;
Some have lost all they had in the world,
And are bankrupts in honour and name.
Some have wasted a fortune in trade—
And by going at all in the ring,
Some have lost e'en a voice in the House;
But they all will be able to sing
Hullahbaloo!

Some are deep in the Slough of Despond,
And so sick of the burthen of life,
That they dream of leaps over a bridge,
Of the pistol, rope, poison and knife;
To the Temples of Riches and Fame
We are not going up in a string;
And to some even Heaven seems black,
But we all shall be able to sing
Hullahbaloo!

We may give up the struggle with Care,
And the last little hope that would stop,
We may strive with a Giant Despair—
From the very blue sky we may drop,
By some sudden bewildering blow
Stricken down like a bird on the wing,—

Or with hearts breaking surely and slow—
But we all shall be able to sing
Hullahbaloo!

Oh! no matter how wretched we be,
How ill-lodg'd, or ill-clad, or ill-fed,
And with only one tile for a roof,—
That we carry about on the head:
We may croak with a very bad cold,
Or a throat that's as dry as a ling,—
There's the Street or the Stage for us all,
For we all shall be able to sing
Hullahbaloo!

There's a Music aloft in the air,
As if Cherubs were humming a song,
Now it's high, now it's low, here and there,
There's a Harmony floating along!
While the steeples are loud in their joy,
To the tune of the bells' ring-a-ding,
Let us chime in a peal, one and all,
For we all should be able to sing
Hullahbaloo!

EPIGRAM

ON THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE STATUES IN TRAFALGAR SQUARE.

If Nelson looks down on a couple of Kings,
However it pleases the Loyals;
'Tis after the fashion of nautical things,
A sky-scraper over the Royals.

THE REGULAR AND THE IRREGULAR DRAMA.

A WRITER in the *Times* lately attributed the decline of the public taste for Theatrical Exhibitions to the superiority of the Dramatic Scenes, serious and comic, which are so admirably got up and performed daily in the Bankruptcy Courts, the Old Bailey, Guildhall, Westminster Hall, the Police Offices, the Courts of Conscience, and other Houses, major and minor, in London and the Provinces. And there is certainly some truth in the theory; for the snatches of Tragedy, Comedy, and Farce, furnished by such places, are much more interesting and amusing, and infinitely more instructive, than the pieces fabricated by most of our modern play-wrights. Some of the Judges and Counsel show quite as "fiery off" as any stars on the boards, and the Jurors, common or special, are quite as clever and entertaining as the walking gentleman. The want of music and dancing in the places alluded to, makes them less strong in Opera and the Ballet, and Her Majesty's Theatre, in the Haymarket, prospers accordingly, from the absence of competition. The Police offices, however, are powerful rivals to the Adelphi, Surrey, &c., in pieces of strong and sometimes very domestic interest, the plots of which are duly recorded in some of the daily prints:—and Melodrama flourishes at the Sessions-house and in the inquest-room. Here and there a Coroner is also a very respectable performer in the funny line; and Constables, Beadles, and Bumpkin witnesses are capital low comedians.

How far it might be practicable to retrieve the fortunes of the Patent Theatres, by allowing a certain portion of the

public business to be transacted on the stage, is left for the Proprietors to discuss with the Lord Chamberlain; nothing else, probably, will ever raise the shares of either to a profitable premium—for, who would pay to sit at their fictitious shows, when he might, gratis, see such exhibitions of real life elsewhere, and listen to the genuine dialogue of human nature? Here is a brief example:—

MISAPPREHENSION.

A DRAMATIC SKETCH.

SCENE.—*A Club Room at the Hare and Hounds. At the table sits the county Coroner with his Clerk. The Jurors are arranged round the board. The Constable, &c., fill the background.* TIMOTHY GUBBINS, *a Witness, is under examination.*

Cor. DID you know the defunct?

Wit. Who's he?

Cor. Why, the dead man.

Wit. Yes.

Cor. Intimately?

Wit. Wery.

Cor. How often have you been in company with him?

Wit. Ony once.

Cor. And do you call that intimately?

Wit. Yes—for he were wery drunk, and I were wery drunk—and that made us like two brothers.

Cor. Who recognised the body?

Wit. Jack Adams.

Cor. How did he recognise him?

Wit. By standing un on his head to let the water run out.

Cor. I mean how did he know him?

Wit. By his plush jacket.

Cor. Anything else?

Wit. No: ony his face were so swelled, his own mother wouldn't have knowed him.

Cor. Then how did you know him?

Wit. 'Cause I warn't his mother. [*Applause in court.*

Cor. What do you consider the cause of his death?

Wit. Drownding in course.

Cor. Was any attempt made to resuscitate him?

Wit. Yes.

Cor. How?

Wit. We sarched his pockets.

Cor. I mean did you try to bring him to?

Wit. Yes—to the public house.

Cor. I mean to recover him?

Wit. No. We warn't told to.

Cor. Did you ever suspect the deceased of mental alienation?

Wit. Yes—the whole village suspected un.

Cor. Why?

Wit. That he alienated one of the Squire's pigs.

Cor. You misunderstand me. I alluded to mental aberration.

Wit. Some thinks he was.

Cor. On what grounds?

Wit. I believe they belonged to Squire Waters.

Cor. Pshaw. I mean was he mad?

Wit. Sartenly.

Cor. What, devoid of reason?

Wit. He had no reason to drown hisself as I know of.

Cor. That will do, Sir. (*To the Jury.*) Gentlemen, you have heard the evidence, and will consider of your verdict.

Foreman. Your worship, we are all of one mind.

Cor. Well—what is it?

Foreman. We don't mind what. We're agreeable to anything your Worship pleases.

Cor. No, gentlemen,—I have no right to dictate,—you had better consult together.

Foreman. We have, your Worship, afore we came, and we're all unanimous.

Cor. I am happy to hear it, gentlemen. (*To the Clerk.*) Mr. Dicks, take down the verdict. Now then, gentlemen.

Foreman. Why, then, your Worship, its "Justifiable Suicide;" but begs to recommend to mercy;—and hopes we shall be allowed our expenses.

A PRACTICAL JOKE.

BLACK, White, and Brown, were young men; in some respects very young—the two first especially, for they were inexperienced, thoughtless, and giddy, to a great many degrees beyond the average. But they were generous, warm-hearted fellows, notwithstanding, and would rather have had a toothache apiece, than have given pain, wilfully, to man, woman, or child,—to horse, dog, or cat.

The trio lived together in the same boarding-house, more like brothers than friends, united in everything but one,—a desperate passion for Miss Theodora Wilmot. That was Brown's secret, in which the other two young men, however, went partners; and many a rallying the lover had to bear on the subject from his heart-whole companions.

"He jests at scars who never felt a wound."

But, like Benedict, the inamorato was too far gone in love for "a whole college of witcrackers to flout him out of his

humour." With such a flame as he had in his bosom, burning as he did, one of Love's martyrs, he might well despise a few squibs; besides, the wags would give over when he was once married. But there was the rub: he was one of the most shy and diffident of mankind—the most bashful bachelor that ever blushed all the shades of *mauvaise honte*, from a warm flesh colour up to a rose damask—the most shrinking of all the race of the Sensitives. How could such a man propose? A thousand times he determined to break the ice, but the ice always broke him. A million times at least he resolved to speak his mind, but his speech went out of his mind, and then his mind seemed to go out of itself, it was so mad at the failure. At all other times boiling, broiling, frying, burning, piping hot, salamandered till done brown by the warmth of his affection, and eloquent as a young barrister alone in his own chambers, in the presence of the lady his blood ran as cold, and his tongue was as dumbfounded, as if the Circean enchantress had actually transformed him into a cod-fish. His very passion seemed to have died suddenly, and left him to stand Mute at the door.

If Miss Wilmot would but have helped him out with a leading question, such as whether he was ever in love, or, if that was too bold for her delicate nature, how he liked such a song as "Crudel," or "Come live with me and be my love;" if she had only looked at him a little less like the ladies at Madame Tussaud's—had she merely seemed to understand his case—but no; she was either naturally ignorant of his symptoms, or wilfully, like Aberfeldie, when he said to a fanciful patient, who hinted something about ossification,—

"Young man, bring me your heart, on a plate, and I'll tell you what's the matter with it."

In vain he tried the usual expedients with which bash-

ful young men seek to reinforce their resolves; his case was beyond brandy. If he had seen a double Miss Wilmot, it would only have turned him into two codfish instead of one. In vain, taking a hint from Schiller's "Fight with the Dragon," he dressed up a lay figure of the Lady, for his courage to practise on—he never succeeded beyond the rehearsal. When he came on he was damned. Poor Brown!

In the meantime his two friends, whether pitying his condition, or for the sport's sake, tried their utmost to egg him on; but it was anything but egging a game chicken. Like some vicious horses, the more he was urged forward, the more he backed—or jibbed off the road—or turned short round and bolted. They even offered to go with him and help him, in the legal phrase, in delivering the declaration, or to propose for him by proxy; but to both proposals he gave a decided negative. There seemed no chance, in fact, of his ever offering himself to the lady's acceptance, except by a posthumous bequest. Black suggested this course, and White offered, with Black's assistance, to draw up the will, but Brown, as usual, would not accede to the proposition, and determined to die intestate, in spite of the additional duty on the administration.

At last, it occurred to his two backers, that perhaps the appearance of a rival in the field might induce their man to rush into the ring, and accordingly, in the absence of any real competitor, they invented one, as formidable a Heart-catcher in personal graces and accomplishments as ever was manufactured for a novel. A six foot fellow in his stockings,—White even estimated his height at another inch taller—and then such black glossy ringlets, and black eyes, with an aquiline nose, and a finely-chiselled mouth, and

a capital chin, and such an exquisite complexion, and what a noble bust, and yet so quiet and gentlemanly; for Black and White, to avoid inconsistency, agreed to describe their imaginary hero from a certain figure in a certain hair-dresser's window. And the bait took. Brown metaphorically swallowed his rival, ringlets and all—how happy could he have done so in reality.

Poor Brown! If that phantom had been a diabolical one, such as is said to haunt and torture the consciences of guilty mortals, it could not have caused him more perturbation. He thought of him, talked of him, swore, but trembled at him, shot at him, fenced at him, got the best and then the worst of him, and above all, he dreamt of him. His nights were terrible—for go where he would, and especially if walking, rowing, sailing, dancing, singing, declaring his love, or even saluting Miss Wilmot, there was the odious rival, turning the duet to a trio, or taking her other arm, protesting in her other ear, squeezing her other hand—zounds!—kissing her other cheek! That was unendurable; so to it they went, foot and fist, tooth and nail, shovel and poker, hammer and tongs, swords, pistols, and blunderbusses, rugging, riving, kicking, smashing, stabbing, shooting, wrestling on the ground, up and down, over and over, biting each other like dogs, till the Brown one's teeth were entangled with the vile ringlets—at least, as he found upon waking, with the fleece of the blanket!

What a life it was! Death at the stake would have been preferable, whether the stake was tender or not. Annihilation would have been still better, provided always that the rival was annihilated along with him—like an "infinite deal of nothing!" Why had he ever been at all!

In the meantime a solitary gleam of comfort sometimes

visited him. From a cause that may be guessed, Black and White, whilst eloquent in praise of the face and chest of the handsome pretender, were unconsciously rather silent about the rest of his figure, in particular never saying a word of his legs. Perhaps they were bowed, like Bacchus's, from riding cock-horse on a barrel, perhaps knock-kneed, like the baker's, or unnaturally short—a happy idea! Brown jumped at it, and indulged it, till in fancy he had twisted the lower limbs of his rival into a brace of right and left corkscrews, with a pair of club feet. That decided him. He resolved to walk with his own legs straight to the lady's house, to kneel, to throw himself, if necessary, at her feet, and with as much advantage as possible display his crural members, and hint that there were men who were only fit to approach a fair lady by jumping in a sack. Away he went; but first he communicated a hint of his purpose to his two friends, swaggering not a little, in his utter ignorance of the share they had in screwing him up to the desperate pitch. Of course Black and White laughed in their sleeves; but they said nothing but what was equivalent to a pat on the back, or the policeman's "move on."

"Good bye," shouted White; "remember faint heart never won fair lady."

"Nor a brown one, either," bawled Black.

"She's mine!" shrieked Brown, cutting a caper with his right leg, and flourishing one arm above his hat, like a colonel at the head of a forlorn hope, going to storm a fort—for example, Badajos. And no hero could have borne himself more bravely, for a few rods, poles, or perches—but then he faltered—then rallied—then wavered—and then marched on again. For whenever he thought of Miss Wilmot he lingered, but then he remembered the rival, and that spurred him forward; and sometimes he thought of both

together, which brought him to a stand still, that he might stamp a little, and vow vengeance a little, and shake his fist a good deal at some unconscious cow, or innocent donkey, or still more innocent empty air. No man ever went so many paces to the mile, besides occasionally going no pace at all. But the slowest coach, even if you lock one wheel, will get to somewhere at last, or still further, and on the same principle, at so many minutes to what-you-please o'clock, the peripatetic lover arrived at the door of his lady-love, and raised his hand towards the lion's head, his heart, though, forestalling him, and with a rapid series of little thumps and big ones, giving as good an imitation as human heart can, of a footman's thundering double knock. His hand tried to copy it, but it was a sad bungle, for after two or three little uncertain, unmeaning taps, as if the wind had done it, and then a pause, he let the iron knob fall with a loud abrupt bang, as if he had burnt his fingers. The moment afterwards he repented, and wished there was such a thing as unknocking, as well as unbuttoning or unpicking; but the irrevocable sound went its course through the hall and down the kitchen stairs, and through the ear of John Footman, till it played a tattoo on its drum. And so John went up the stairs, and through the hall, and opened the door, catching Mr. Brown in the very act of turning away, to sneak off, as the mere perpetrator of a run-away knock. What an abominably fast Footman! If he had but stopped to yawn, and stretch, and inquire, was that the knocker? through the regular three times of asking—but there he was, and there was no escape from him. So Mr. Brown walked in, or rather stumbled over the threshold, and having stropped his shoes on the mat, from heel to point, for at least two minutes, and hung up his hat twice, for the first time it fell down—without his catching

it,—well, after that, having first had a tedious attack of influenza, he pocketed his handkerchief again,—and at last—what a nasty short nervous cough he had, with a sort of an aguish fit from coming over the Flats—at last he got up the drawing-room stairs, heard his name announced and a hive of bees swarming at the same time—saw a carpet, then a ceiling, and then a table with two candles dancing on it, apparently for the amusement of Miss Wilmot. She was alone, and as he wished to be alone with her, so we leave him.

In the meantime Black and White, over their tea, discussed the chances for and against the success of the wooer, and settled that the odds were something like all St. George's, Hanover Square to a Dissenting chapel in his favour. In reality he was rather well looking than otherwise, with an elegant figure, a good address, and pleasing manners—such a person as few young ladies, if disengaged, would be likely to refuse. And as to any rival, they had never heard of or seen any trace of one, except the fellow with the black ringlets, and of him only his figure-head. It was a favourable sign besides, that Brown's visit was such a long one: hour struck after hour, but he did not return—how could he? Doubtless, having told his love, he had extorted a mutual confession in return, and was enjoying that sweet confidence between young hearts, for which the Longest Day and a bittock would hardly seem long enough!

Nine! Ten! Eleven! and still he came not—nor yet at Twelve—when the pair determined to wait no longer, but to return to their beds. In the way to their rooms they had to pass Brown's chamber, the door of which stood wide open,—and amongst other prominent objects within, Black's eye was attracted by a very large stout hook projecting from a beam on the wall. The hint was enough. In his own room

he kept a stout cord, to escape by from his first-floor window, in case of fire. This rope he fetched, made a slip noose in it, most scientifically, and then fastened the other end to the hook. White looked on, till the apparatus was complete, and then with the burnt end of a stick, inscribed on the wall—

"FOR A REJECTED LOVER."

It was a capital joke, to judge by the amount of their laughter, but White suddenly turned rather grave. "Suppose," said he, "that by any chance she should refuse him—he will perhaps take it in dudgeon,—and besides, he would be terribly cut up, poor fellow, and I should be sorry to vex him."

"Not he!" said Black. "She is sure to have him, and he will return in such raptures, that the worst joke in the world would seem the best in it, and set him crowing like a cock! But he will want something to throw himself off from"—and with a chuckle he pushed a chair immediately under the rope. The friends then shook hands, bade each other good night, and went to bed,—and from bed to sleep, as sound as tops. Black dreamt of nothing: White had a vision of Brown's wedding, and that he fell in love with the bridesmaid; but all the amenities of the dream gradually vanished, till after several obscure entanglements he found himself tied neck and heels with that infernal cord. But that was not the worst—by-and-by the rope seemed to become endowed with life, and began twisting about him like a serpent, now encircling one limb, then another, then tightly compressing his chest and lungs till he could hardly breathe, and finally coiling round his throat so tightly that he felt all but strangled. In short, he suffered under a terrible nightmare.

It was nearly two in the morning before Brown came

home. He let himself in with his key, crept up to his bedroom, and struck a light. What a face it flashed upon! Haggard and pale as death! His eyes were hollow, and his blue lips quivered as if with intense cold. The skirts of his coat were torn; his pantaloons, up to the knees, were stained with mud. Never did human wretch look so utterly forlorn! He had been rejected—somewhat harshly—by the lady; and with a crushed heart had hurried out into the Waste, a type of the wide world to him, over the dreary Flats. He had rambled, at random, through mire, and marsh, and thicket—unable to confront a human face—to bear the sound of the human voice. Poor fellow! What long distracting hours he must have spent thus; darker in hope than the night—colder at heart than its wintry wind. At last some dubious impulse had led him home; perhaps to seek the consolations of friendship; the sympathy of those two, the very two, who had unconsciously prepared for him such a pang! For all at once his eye glanced on the rope, and the mocking inscription.

Oh! what trivial things determine the greatest turns of a mortal's destiny! Many a man, doubtless, in the first frenzy of despair or disappointment, has contemplated suicide—but some deliberation on the mode, and the absence of the means, have afforded time for reflection and repentance. If that fatal rope had not been there, ready fixed—the noose prepared:—if even the chair had been to fetch,—a minute gained, one precious minute might have sufficed for the birth of a better thought:—that petty fragment of time might have influenced the fate of a soul for eternity—but there was, alas! no such saving pause! Unexpectedly probed to the quick in the recent wound, the anguish was too keen for a brain already maddened by mental agony—the doomed man, muttering the stinging motto, stepped on the seat,

seized the rope—opened the noose; put his head through it; closed his eyes, clasped his hands; kicked away the chair ——and that was a Practical Joke.

REVIEW.

THE POST-OFFICE LONDON DIRECTORY FOR 1844.—W. Kelly & Co.

"WHEN Adam delved and Eve span," among all the things whereof they little thought, the least was a Post Office London Directory, comprising no end of names, instructing folk in all manner of ways, and putting people (as they do in schools and on railways) into all sorts of classes. In this huge volume, numerous as are the names, every one of them is a marked man or woman; and even the most courtly are here, like Charity children and policemen, each separately and particularly lettered and numbered. Lords and leather-sellers, physicians and pork-butchers, milliners and mill-wrights, are all regularly ticketed here, cheek by jowl, like fellowship-porters. In vain can the most dainty exclusive hope to escape from the enormous circle of society into which her Majesty's Postmaster-general has here introduced him. No master of the ceremonies could be so careful to exclude the nobodies as the Postmaster-general to include all the bodies, including "Mr. Martin Body, timber merchant, Lower Salisbury Place, Lock's Fields;" and to show that his lively volume is not a "corporation without a soul," he has animated page 924 with a couple of "Souls" from Finsbury, and page 923 with two from Aldermanbury. But since he has thus hospitably "brought them together," at Christmas

time, it must be admitted that due care has been taken in telling them off again conveniently into the different parts of this biblical mansion. It may, however, be as well to give the compilers of such a useful tome a hint of an improvement which may serve to facilitate the reference to each particular class. It is this. Let each have a distinct colour stained on the edge, as is done with French works of a similar character. Thus, the Law Directory might have a black edge, the Court Directory red, the Physic Directory blue, &c. Any one then wanting to refer, could, guided by the colour, instantly open the volume at the particular part he required.

We cannot close this notice without referring to an omission which we regard as personal and quite unaccountable in a literary man like the Postmaster-general. Under the letter A we found "artists" and "awl-blade-makers," but we looked in vain for "authors." Oh Col. Maberley, Col. Maberley, could you not find a local habitation for Selves and Co. in your bills of mortality? Are we indeed become a "dead letter" in your office? Do you really regard us as defunct; or, because Grub Street is grubbed up, that we are removed to some *terra incognita*, some bourn, not mentioned in Bourne's Gazetteer, whence no traveller returns? What! since the Penny postage reform, has an increase of letters really produced a decrease of authors? There must be something wrong in your book, Col. Maberley, which you must reform altogether before 1st January, 1845.

REAL RANDOM READINGS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "HOOD'S MAGAZINE."

SIR,—I do not know whether it has ever occurred to you, but it has struck me very forcibly, that the reminiscences of a bad memory might be quite as amusing, if not so instructive, as those of a good one. Certainly, some of the things published under the titles of Recollections, Records, Reminiscences, Retrospectives, &c., &c., have been extremely dull and tame; so much so as to make one wish that the authors, like Peter Pindar's George the Third, had remembered to forget them. For my part, I confess I set very little value on the historical embalming of mere names and dates; regarding them like preserved mummies, as rather dry matters of fact. At any rate, I have Mrs. Malaprop on my side, who did not approve of violent memories any more than myself. The level railway progress of such a powerful faculty must surely be less interesting and romantic than the rambles of a weak one, straying unconsciously from the path of reality into the great forest of fiction, and losing itself like a Babe in the Wood!

Now, my own memory was never a good one. Mnemosyne when I was born must have forgotten her invitation to the gossipping, or to bring me those organs with which she endows mankind in general, and the Poet of her Pleasures in particular, Mr. Thomas Campbell. Like him

> "Wafted by her gentle flow,
> Oft up the stream of time I try to row,"

but without his rudder and compass. My memory, as I think I said before, was never a good one, and from age and

natural decay is not even what it was. It especially fails me as to names, dates, places, and persons; but as Pope says to Eloise, or to the New Heloise,

"Give all you can, and we will give the rest."

I don't profess to be a regular Retrospective Reviewer like what's-his-name who used to edit it; but shall be guilty, I know, in my recallings of the past of a great many errors and anacreonisms, or anachronisms—which is it? It is easy, as Curran said to Dean Swift, if it wasn't Swift to Curran, it is easy for futurity to predict for posterity—I forget the exact words, but remember the sense; and on the same principle, when an octogenarian like myself is in the case—where was I? O! about Rogers's "Pleasures of Imagination." I remember Rogers well, though I forget where I met him, or on what occasion. But it was either at Lord Nelson's funeral in Westminster Abbey, or at George the Third's attempt, when he was out of his mind, on the life of Peg Nicholson. But I am sure it was Rogers; for he had just brought out either his "World before the Flood," or the World before that. There was to be a great party at Hannah Porter's, the authoress of "Evelina"—yes, "Evelina"—I believe I ought to have said Sir Charles Grandison; but at any rate the Bristol Milkwoman that Cowper patronised, was of the party. I recollect asking her what she thought of "Lalla Rookh." All the Johnsons were present. The great Doctor, Mrs. J., and all the little ones—they had just come up from Ludlow, or Lincoln, or Leicester, or Liverpool, or some place with an L, and had the provincial accent very strong. His patron was with him, Bubb Doddington, since Lord Melbourne Regis—of whom it was said he was a Lord amongst Lords, and a Wit amongst Wits. I quite forget what public service procured him his title. Horace Walpole

was to have been there too, but could not come. I am not sure that he was not dead. But it was either Horace Walpole, or Horace Mann, or Horace Smith, or Horace Twiss—I'm sure as to the Horace. We played at whist, and I remember having Pam five times running—but the amount of my winnings has escaped me. What else passed is, alas! as obliterated from my mind as if I had been dipped in the Styx—no, the Lethe. Yet slight as they are, these memorials of such celebrated Personages may do for a contribution to their Memories *poor servir*—perhaps the last word but one ought to be spelt pour, or perhaps pore. But I forget my French. As such, if you think, Sir, that a few Retrospective Sketches in the same style would suit your Metropolitan Magazine—I beg pardon, Blackwood's Miscellany—they are most heartily at your service; and, hoping for the favour of an early reply,

I am, Sir, your very obedient servant,

E. TYRRELL.

[The writer of the foregoing letter, a namesake, but no relation surely, of the City Remembrancer, is requested to forward his address.—ED. HOOD'S MAG.]

A DREAM BY THE FIRE.

—♦—

IT is impossible, as every one knows, to sit by the fire in winter-time without gazing at it very earnestly; and the more you gaze, the more you see in it,—strange faces, and one of your love, perhaps, like a very "red, red rose"—a flamingo, or a whole flock of them,—Mount Vesuvius, with the neighbourhood overrun by the molten lava; a distant view of the Potteries, or the Carron Iron Works, by night,

with the furnaces at full work; there is no end of the glowing objects you may see between or above the bars, if you have the least spark of imagination to eke them out with.

It is not a pleasure, however, without its price; in the course of time the eyes become parched by the heat, the eyelids grow heavy, and in a moment or two you will inevitably go to sleep; to avoid which I jumped up, though with some effort, and determined to look in at the Coal Hole —not the one in the cellar, but the one in the Strand. Still, from the name, the reader may run away with the notion, or rather be run away with, the notion that the Coal Hole goes the whole coal, at some shed or dingy wharf down those dark arches or narrow lanes in the neighbourhood of the Adelphi —that it is a depository for Wallsend, Russell's Main, and Adair's; Hetton, Pontops, and Tanfield's, and all the other varieties of the black diamond. Whereas, if they take the right Rhodes, they will find a well-known house of entertainment in Fountain Court, celebrated for its good cheer and comic singing, to which a little deaf-and-dumb waiter,—call him page if you please—played a mute accompaniment.

Well, I walked in, passing the bar on the right, to the large room, where some voice in three volumes was singing a glee, with as much good will as if it had been earning three suppers. O what a rich jolly triple chorus it was, singing of wine and Bacchus, and Venus and myrtles,—while with every line some bright glorious image rose up in the mind's eye,—fauns skipping and nymphs dancing, grapes clustering, flowers springing, birds singing, and the sun shining from the clear blue sky with a fervour that made the blood bound through the heart, and run with a sensible thrill through every vein! And when the song ceased, the genial feeling did not cease with it, for though there was no sun there, or blue sky, or clustering vines, there was abundance of radiant

lamps, and the fire glowed like a furnace, and the generous juice of the grape shone in amber and ruby through the crystal, and shed a light as from the painted windows of the Temple of Bacchus on the snowy table-cloths. And then those social little nooks round the room! Mirth occupied one; you could hear him laughing till his sides shook and his voice quavered. Friendship had taken possession of the next one; and was giving out hearty toasts and sentiments, followed by hip, hip, hips! and loud hurrahs! Harmony sat in the third: he had joined in the *trio*, a capital *fourth*—and in the other boxes sat dozens of Sociables, and United Brethren, and Odd Fellows enjoying themselves to their hearts' content, over the good things, solid and liquid, of this world. What comfortable steams rose over the tops of the partitions; what savoury odours streamed around; what a cheerful clatter of knives and forks and plates; what a merry jingle of bottles and glasses as they kissed each other in their hospitable journeys—like gossips laden with drink; what a tinkling, as if of little bells, between the glass and the busy spoon! What fumes of gin, rum, and brandy, mingling in the air and making a sort of aromatic punch for the benefit of the nose! And what rattling peals of laughter that seemed to come from some fat fellow with two hearts—one mocking the other! And all the while the deaf-and-dumb page, inspired by the spirit of the place, grew more and more intelligent, till he seemed to hear with every feature but his ears, and to speak with every feature but his mouth.

And better than all, in a corner box there was my very crony, my bosom friend, the friend of my soul, my other self, old Mann—or old humanity as we used to call him, sipping from a huge goblet to which he invited everybody who only looked at him—for he had a large heart and a liberal hand, loved everybody in the world but himself, and

deserved to be as largely loved in return. Yes—there he was, smiling and looking like a father to every one in the room. It was impossible not to drink with him when he asked you, which he was as sure to do, if you were within hearing, as that Burton ale is not Burton's Melancholy. So to it we went, glass for glass, hob and nob, 'here's to thee,' and 'fill again,'—and the wife and children, down to the baby in arms, were pledged in humming ale. At least that was *his* liquor, as it was Adam's, though of a weaker sort, for before A. B. was invented, double X would have been an anachronism. However, strong ale was his drink, and of all songs he best loved that old one, which sings of "jolly good ale and olde." But every man else might call for what he liked and welcome,—even the stranger whose face he had never seen before was a brother by descent to old Mann, and treated accordingly. So to it, I say, we went, with a will as the sailors say, like the jovial topers in Rabelais, taking great draughts of the stingo, and rare slices of the brawn, and huge trusses of the green salad, in which two or three lobsters had lost themselves, like tars in the country parts; and, meanwhile, the singing began again, first only one voice, then two, then three, then a fourth chimed in, and then more and more till the room rang again with the lusty chorus! Oh 'twas a glorious place that Coal Hole!—warm, bright, joyous with song and laughter,—you quite forgot there was such a thing as care, dull care, in the world!

Well, we drank on, old Mann and I, till my head became so heavy with the ale that had mounted into it, that I could not hold it up, but do what I would, it must needs drop first on my bosom, and then lower till it bobbed on the table; and lo, when it bobbed up again I was all in the dark, pitch dark. Every lamp had gone out; and as to the fire, it had died of apoplexy, or something as sudden, for there was not

a spark left of it. I never felt so cold and dreary in my life, for with the light and the warmth, the voices had died away too. Instead of the jovial chorus, the joyous jest, the many tongues, all clattering together, and the multitudinous laughing, one jolly cock crowing to another, like the chanticleers of the village, . . . all mute—not a tongue wagged—silent as death! I stretched out my hand for my ale, it was gone, table and all. I felt for old Mann and he was gone too; or turned into something cold, damp, and hard, like a wall. As soon as I could fetch my breath and voice, I called him: "Mann! Mann! Mann! Where are you?"

"Here I am," answered the voice of Mann, as from somewhere under the floor.

"What, are we down stairs?"

"I believe we are," grumbled the voice.

"What, down in the cellar?"

"Yes."

"Good God! How did we come there?" said I. "We had not such a great deal of ale! Why we were up in the great room, with a blazing fire, and the lamps, and Hudson or somebody was singing a comic song. For the Lord's sake, Mann, let's get up again. Where are you—what are you doing?"

"Here—getting coal!"

"Getting coal!"—(how drunk he must have been!)—And again I called to him by name—"Mann! Mann!"

"Here."

"Where?"

"Here."

Following the sound, I struck my head against a beam or a wall, with a crash that almost stunned me. I was in a low passage, so low that I was obliged to bend almost double. But there was a glimmer of light before me, and I crept

towards it, till at last I saw Mann, lying on his back in a sort of black cupboard, or gigantic coffin, at the top of which he was pecking with a pickaxe, as if he had been buried alive and was trying to break out. He was almost naked, and had his head bound up with a dirty cloth.

"Gracious Heaven! Mann! how came you there?—how came we here? I thought we were in the Coal Hole!"

"And so we are," said Mann, without turning his head or stopping for a moment in his labour. Pick, pick, pick—as if his return to the world depended on it. And I longed for a pickaxe, too, the black earth seemed to be closing upon me so oppressively. What a mystery it was! As if I and Mann had actually passed, by death, from the upper world, its light, its warmth, and human society, to the dark chambers of the grave! And was it really so?—had we bidden adieu for ever to the sun, for ever and ever to the blue skies and the green earth, and the sweet elastic air in which we used to live? Were we really sundered from all dear social ties, till the earth crumbled away, and the heavens rolled up like a parchment before the fire? It wanted not demons to convert it to a place of torment—the horrors of retrospection were sufficient to make that gloomy vault, or whatever it was, the abode of exquisite anguish. O how vividly returned upon me the blessed warmth and light, the communion with my kind, from which I was so suddenly and unaccountably cut off! Perhaps—so whispered a remorseful, misgiving thought—I had enjoyed these too much, too selfishly, too heedlessly, without asking or caring what portion others of my fellow-men had in the bounties of Providence. Perchance, for that sin, I had been condemned to an immortal solitary confinement, in the bowels of the earth—for I was solitary—Mann was too much occupied with his tool, pick, pick, pick, to be a companion. And something told me, that there he

might work for a thousand years without obtaining a glimpse of the blue sky. Mann, who on earth had so enjoyed the fellowship of man! and for very loneliness I could not help calling to him, occasionally, only for the sound of his voice, but he was too much absorbed in his dreary task to attend to me; sometimes he briefly answered me, sometimes not. Pick, pick, pick; he was so abstracted from me, by his labour, it was as if he had not been there. Oh, for but one human being that would speak if spoken to,—that would look at me, feel with me; and as I prayed, a faint light approached, from some unfathomable distance, nearer and nearer, till a woman, or the ghost of a woman, stooping, partly because of the low channel, and partly, it seemed, from some heavy burden on her back, came crawling past me. Another victim of Divine wrath, doomed to dreadful penance in the chambers of the earth. Oh, how squalid she was—how worn by woe—how haggard, how gaunt, how utterly withered from all that is womanly into all that is witch-like! And yet, even in that wasted form, and those wretched features, I recognised one I had known above—she was the wife of Mann!

"Elinor!"

But she made no answer, save a mournful shake of the head, and crept slowly on; she had not breath or heart to speak. Methought, now perhaps Mann will turn towards her, and pause in his work; but pick, pick, pick, pick, he let his wife, his miserable wife, pass on without a word or a glance. There was no time *there*, then, even for love! My soul sank within me. What an eternity was before me; dead even to hope! Nay not yet, for two more forms approached, strangely harnessed, and painfully dragging behind them some ponderous load, that made them stop to pant for breath—if it could be called breath, that was

inhaled in that awful subterranean prison. And as they stopped I knew them, a girl and a boy—but oh, how sadly disfigured! In years and size so young, in face so carefully old, like pain-ridden dwarfs! They were Mann's children! But the father looked not at his children; the children glanced not at their father! there was no time for love, conjugal, paternal, or filial, in that terrible place!

The ways of Providence are inscrutable! It is not for us to pry into the secrets of Heaven, and yet I could not help asking in my soul, by what awful guilt Mann, his wife, and his poor children, could have incurred so stupendous a punishment, such an appalling infliction of the Divine wrath? Above ground, on the living earth, they had seemed amongst the better examples of human nature; generous, charitable in word and deed, honest, industrious, tenderly affectionate to each other. I had known them under various phases, in sickness, in poverty, and oppressed, and yet how unrepining they were, how patient, how forbearing! Above all, in their days of want, how munificent, bestowing the half of their little on those who had less! As I thought of it, a crushing sense of my own unworthiness, compared with their worth, completely overwhelmed me. There was no juggling *there*, no self-deceit in that pitch-black prison, the Condemned Cell of the Soul! Weighed, even in my own balance, against poor Mann, conscience declared me deficient,—that I ought rather to have been condemned to pick, pick, pick, picking at that sable roof, to gain a glimpse, if I could, of the blessed face of Nature! "Mann," I cried, "Mann!"

"Well."

"Let me work for you a bit. You must be cramped in that narrow cell—and worn out with labour."

"Yes—my back 's a'most broke—and my neck aches as if it had been twisted."

"Give me the pick."

He put the tool into my hand—how heavy it was! And I crept into the black niche; but it was so like getting into the narrow home, that I lay paralysed with cold and dread, unable to lift my arm. In the mean time a faint light appeared as before, but from the opposite direction: it might be that Mann's wife and children were on their return—but no! a secret whisper told me that they were my own partner and our little ones, and I involuntarily closed my eyes against a spectacle, painted beforehand, on the blank black air. I dared not look at my wife or children—it was agony, unutterable agony, only to think of them in those depths of desolation.

But I was not to be spared that infliction. Through my eyelids, supernaturally transparent, I beheld a sight that filled my soul with bitterness. Oh, those dear young faces, so prematurely old, hunger-pinched, and puckered with cares—precociously informed of the woes of the world—children, without childhood. And, oh! that sad, forlorn matron's face, once the sunniest on earth; now, with hair so gray, eyes so dull, lips so thin—misery, misery! The sight was unbearable, and I shrieked out, "I am, I am in ——"

But before I could pronounce the unmentionable word, my eyes suddenly opened, and I saw before me my winter fire, with that great black block of the mineral fuel on the top, which, by its intense contrast with the glowing mass beneath, had led me into such a dream of the DARK and BRIGHT of the world, and that transition from the Coal Hole to the Coal Mine.

THE MARY.

A SEA-SIDE SKETCH.

Lov'st thou not, Alice, with the early tide
To see the hardy Fisher hoist his mast,
And stretch his sail towards the ocean wide,—
Like God's own beadsman going forth to cast
His net into the deep, which doth provide
Enormous bounties, hidden in its vast
Bosom like Charity's, for all who seek
And take its gracious boon thankful and meek?

The sea is bright with morning,—but the dark
Seems still to linger on his broad black sail,
For it is early hoisted, like a mark
For the low sun to shoot at with his pale
And level beams: All round the shadowy bark
The green wave glimmers, and the gentle gale
Swells in her canvas, till the waters show
The keel's new speed, and whiten at the bow.

Then look abaft—(for thou canst understand
That phrase)—and there he sitteth at the stern,
Grasping the tiller in his broad brown hand,
The hardy Fisherman. Thou may'st discern
Ten fathoms off the wrinkles in the tann'd
And honest countenance that he will turn
To look upon us, with a quiet gaze—
As we are passing on our several ways.

So, some ten days ago, on such a morn,
The Mary, like a seamew, sought her spoil
Amongst the finny race: 'twas when the corn
Woo'd the sharp sickle, and the golden toil
Summon'd all rustic hands to fill the horn
Of Ceres to the brim, that brave turmoil
Was at the prime, and Woodgate went to reap
His harvest too, upon the broad blue deep.

His mast was up, his anchor heaved aboard,
His mainsail stretching in the first gray gleams
Of morning, for the wind. Ben's eye was stored
With fishes—fishes swam in all his dreams,
And all the goodly east seem'd but a hoard
Of silvery fishes, that in shoals and streams
Groped into the deep dusk that fill'd the sky,
For him to catch in meshes of his eye.

For Ben had the true sailor's sanguine heart,
And saw the future with a boy's brave thought,
No doubts, nor faint misgivings had a part
In his bright visions—ay, before he caught
His fish, he sold them in the scaly mart,
And summ'd the net proceeds. This should have brought
Despair upon him when his hopes were foil'd,
But though one crop was marr'd, again he toil'd

And sow'd his seed afresh.—Many foul blights
Perish'd his hardwon gains—yet he had plann'd
No schemes of too extravagant delights—
No goodly houses on the Goodwin sand—
But a small humble home, and loving nights,
Such as his honest heart and earnest hand

Might fairly purchase. Were these hopes too airy?
Such as they were, they rested on thee, Mary.

She was the prize of many a toilsome year,
And hardwon wages, on the perilous sea—
Of savings ever since the shipboy's tear
Was shed for home, that lay beyond the lee;—
She was purveyor for his other dear
Mary, and for the infant yet to be
Fruit of their married loves. These made him dote
Upon the homely beauties of his boat,

Whose pitch black hull roll'd darkly on the wave,
No gayer than one single stripe of blue
Could make her swarthy sides. She seem'd a slave,
A negro among boats—that only knew
Hardship and rugged toil—no pennons brave
Flaunted upon the mast—but oft a few
Dark dripping jackets flutter'd to the air,
Ensigns of hardihood and toilsome care.

And when she ventured for the deep, she spread
A tawny sail against the sunbright sky,
Dark as a cloud that journeys overhead—
But then those tawny wings were stretch'd to fly
Across the wide sea desert for the bread
Of babes and mothers—many an anxious eye
Dwelt on her course, and many a fervent pray'r
Invoked the Heavens to protect and spare.

Where is she now? The secrets of the deep
Are dark and hidden from the human ken;

Only the sea-bird saw the surges sweep
Over the bark of the devoted Ben,—
Meanwhile a widow sobs and orphans weep,
And sighs are heard from weatherbeaten men,
Dark sunburnt men, uncouth and rude and hairy,
While loungers idly ask, "Where is the Mary?"

A DISCOVERY IN ASTRONOMY.

One day—I had it from a hasty mouth
Accustom'd to make many blunders daily,
And therefore will not name, precisely, South,
Herschell, or Baily—
But one of those great men who watch the skies,
With all their rolling, winking eyes,
Was looking at that Orb whose ancient God
Was patron of the Ode, and Song, and Sonnet,
When thus he musing cried—"It's very odd
That no Astronomer of all the squad
Can tell the nature of those spots upon it!"

"Lord, master!" mutter'd John, a liveried elf,
"To wonder so at spots upon the sun!
I'll tell you what he's done—
Freckled hisself!"

THE ECHO.

To avoid mistakes, be it understood that our Echo is not intended to be like the monotonous Repeater of the Lurlei Berg, which says the same thing over and over some dozen times; nor yet like Mr. Rogers' famous Echo at Ware, that only answers "Where?" It will not merely mock the last word or syllable addressed to it, but play at question and answer, after the manner of the celebrated Irish Echo, recorded by Joe Miller. There will be meaning and matter in its responses, as in those of the very original Echo, in Hudibras, which replied so pertinently to the queries of Orsin on the loss of his bear. Nay, on occasion, our Echo will speak without being spoken to, and whisper its own mind in a still *wee* voice, like the Ghost of an Editor. For example:—

"SIR: If the following Verses," &c. &c.

"ECHO: *Sir, we wish you a very harmonious New Year.*"

"SIR: Would you like a series of Essays on Bacon?"

"ECHO: *Yes; at breakfast, subject to the advice of our Physician.*"

Mr. B. is referred to Downing-street for the "Armorial Barings" he inquires about. If that fails, he may try Sir Charles Young, or the *Morning Herald.*

Our Foreign Correspondents are counselled to be cautious in the selection of conveyances for the transmission of their MSS., and to be careful in the packing. Two parcels of *broken English* have come to hand from abroad.

We remember reading in a recent notorious work, not otherwise very remarkable for originality, of a boat being forced through "a *serf*." Is the "Nautical Tale" from the same manufactory? There is certainly a resemblance of style in the following passage: "Our ship had struck on the *Sillies*. The sea was making *breeches* over her, and we were buried in *serge*."

THE LADY'S DREAM.

The lady lay in her bed,
Her couch so warm and soft,
But her sleep was restless and broken still;
For turning often and oft
From side to side, she mutter'd and moan'd,
And toss'd her arms aloft.

At last she startled up,
And gazed on the vacant air,
With a look of awe, as if she saw
Some dreadful phantom there—
And then in the pillow she buried her face
From visions ill to bear.

The very curtain shook,
Her terror was so extreme;
And the light that fell on the broider'd quilt
Kept a tremulous gleam;
And her voice was hollow, and shook as she cried:—
"Oh me! that awful dream!

" That weary, weary walk,
In the churchyard's dismal ground!
And those horrible things, with shady wings,
That came and flitted round,—
Death, death, and nothing but death,
In every sight and sound!

" And oh! those maidens young,
Who wrought in that dreary room,
With figures drooping and spectres thin,
And cheeks without a bloom;—
And the Voice that cried, 'For the pomp of pride,
We haste to an early tomb!

"'For the pomp and pleasure of Pride,
We toil like Afric slaves,
And only to earn a home at last,
Where yonder cypress waves;'—
And then they pointed—I never saw
A ground so full of graves!

" And still the coffins came,
With their sorrowful trains and slow;
Coffin after coffin still,
A sad and sickening show;
From grief exempt, I never had dreamt
Of such a World of Woe!

" Of the hearts that daily break,
Of the tears that hourly fall,
Of the many, many troubles of life,
That grieve this earthly ball—
Disease and Hunger, and Pain, and Want,
But now I dreamt of them all!

"For the blind and the cripple were there,
And the babe that pined for bread,
And the houseless man, and the widow poor
Who begged—to bury the dead;
The naked, alas, that I might have clad,
The famish'd I might have fed!

"The sorrow I might have sooth'd,
And the unregarded tears;
For many a thronging shape was there,
From long forgotten years,
Aye, even the poor rejected Moor,
Who raised my childish fears!

"Each pleading look, that long ago
I scann'd with a heedless eye,
Each face was gazing as plainly there,
As when I pass'd it by:
Woe, woe for me if the past should be
Thus present when I die!

"No need of sulphurous lake,
No need of fiery coal,
But only that crowd of human kind
Who wanted pity and dole—
In everlasting retrospect—
Will wring my sinful soul!

"Alas! I have walk'd through life
Too heedless where I trod;
Nay, helping to trample my fellow worm,
And fill the burial sod—
Forgetting that even the sparrow falls
Not unmark'd of God!

"I drank the richest draughts;
And ate whatever is good—
Fish, and flesh, and fowl, and fruit,
Supplied my hungry mood;
But I never remember'd the wretched ones
That starve for want of food!

"I dress'd as the noble dress,
In cloth of silver and gold,
With silk, and satin, and costly furs,
In many an ample fold;
But I never remember'd the naked limbs
That froze with winter's cold.

"The wounds I might have heal'd!
The human sorrow and smart!
And yet it never was in my soul
To play so ill a part:
But evil is wrought by want of Thought,
As well as want of Heart!"

She clasp'd her fervent hands,
And the tears began to stream;
Large, and bitter, and fast they fell,
Remorse was so extreme:
And yet, oh yet, that many a Dame
Would dream the Lady's Dream!

[The illustration to the "Lady's Dream" was from my father's pencil. The following note, referring to the picture, was written to William Harvey, who however was applied-to too late. It will show some of the difficulties, as well as the design of the publication, which it was intended to carry on without the assistance of "the Trade," if possible.]

MY DEAR HARVEY,

I SENT you the Magazine. There is a dead set against it in the trade, not one will they put in a window or hang on showboard. But we shall beat them. I have the press on my side.

Now we have determined on a woodcut number for our 2nd, and we want you to do one in your very best style, and to get it engraved in the very best ditto, to do you all justice—Thomson, or if he could not, perhaps Williams—but *you* had better see to that—so as to show you off best. The great thing is time, in which you must not deceive yourself, as it is imperative on us to forestall the other Mags. this month. But that is between ourselves. I can give you a subject at once, which may save you some trouble—my own Modern Belinda—if you take to the subject. You can draw it your own way—perhaps introducing the same accessories. We want a capital specimen of Harvey, as I think we have given of Creswick.* Pray let me know your mind as early as you can, and get it forward. We shall not haggle about terms or be Cradocky. Only let us be *sure* as to *time*, by not deceiving yourself about it.

We shall do very well,—but rather a hard fight of it at first with the trade. All send love to you.

Yours very tru_y,

THOS. HOOD.

W. Harvey, Esq.

* The illustration of the "Haunted House," which appeared with the first number.

A NEW BERRY.

A FEW evenings since, at a small party in Gardiner's Lane, where of course not one of the company had any knowledge of Horticulture, the mention of the Service Berry (or Sorb) gave rise to a discussion as to what sort of berry it was. One person thought it was either the hip or haw; another that it was a species of "cramberry;" a third that it grew on the elder tree—nobody appeared to have had any acquaintance with the fruit; till at last an old half-pay officer guessed—and was held to have solved the riddle—that it was a sort of Berry you got in the Service, commonly called a bullet.

NATURE AND ART.

THE following Correspondence is submitted, without comment, to the reader, who must discover for himself to which of our Art-Unions it refers. Perhaps it applies indirectly to all Picture Lotteries and raffles for Engravings, in which the very best *designs* are left at the mercy of *chance*.

I.—To R. A. BRUSH, Esq., London.

SUR,

About the Hart Unnion. Accordin to yure advice I tuck out for my Prize that are grate Picter as was in the Xibition and am sorry to say It dont give sattisfaction to noboddy, nayther to self and familly or any Frend watsum-

ever. Indeed sum pepel dont scrupple to say Ive been reglarly Dun in ile.

The fust thing I did on its arrival were to stick it up in the back Parlour verry mugh agin my Missis, who objected to its takin too much of her room, witch she likes to have to herself. Howsumever there it were and I made a pint to ax everry boddy, custumers, & nabers, to step in & faver with their oppinions And witch am concernd to say is all unanimus Per Contra, And partickly Sam Jones the Hous Painter whom is reckond a judge. As youd say if youd seed him squinnyin at it thro a roll of paper like one of the reglar knowin wuns I see at the Nashunal Gallery. Besides backin & backin furder & furder off to get the rite Distance as he said, till he backt into the fire. Whereby he says theres not a room in the hole Premisis big enuff to get at the focus. And sure enuff the nigher you look into it the furder youre off from diskivering the meanin. And my Missis objecs in to-to to landskips in doors witch sounds resonable and agreable to Natur only it would spile in the open air. So wat to do with the Pictur lord nose. Why Id better have had a share in the Boy's Distributing, with a chance of gittin a hactive one, to go round with the Tray.

As for Dadley, he wont have it at no price—not even for a sign—for says he theres no entertanement in it for man or horse. And witch I am almost convarted to myself, arter lookin at it for three Days runnin. So you see it dont impruve on acquaintance. Rigsby the Carpenter is of the same mind as the others; He have wun a Prize himself, that are Print as you see in everry House I goes to, like the Willer patten chaney Namely the yung Female with the Lion walkin into the Cottage—why he don't walk into her & the old oman too is astonishin.

Well, there it is in the littel back parler, & as Jones says,

"bein kill'd for want of space," & advises to stick it in the slorterous, But witch I cant spare for a Picter Gallery.

As such havin follerd your proffeshinal advice witch makes you responsibel for the same, Beg to know wether the Picter cant be took back at a redeuced Wallyation Or by way of swop for the same length and Bredth, by the foot square, of littel paintings In witch case Sporting subjex would be preferd. Or would be agreable to take out the Amount in fammily likenesses, includin my grey mare.

Hopin for the faver of an erly reply I am

Sur·

Your very humbel sarvent

RICHARD CARNABY.

II.—(THE ANSWER.)

SIR,

In reply to your communication I beg to state, that having afforded you the benefit of my professional knowledge and experience in the selection of a Picture, I am quite as deeply concerned as I ought to be that the result has not proved satisfactory to yourself, Mr. Jones the House Painter, and the rest of the provincial connoisseurs.

As to taking back the Picture, under any of the arrrangements you propose, it is quite out of the question; and indeed altogether inconsistent with the rules and views of a Society expressly instituted for the encouragement of a taste for the Fine Arts.

I am, Sir,

Yours, &c.

R. A. BRUSH.

III.—To Mr. Brush.

Sur,

Am sorry you decline to take the Pictur off my hands havin proposed such Fair Terms. As to my encurragin a taste for the Fine Harts, as my missis say, its my bisness to encurrege a taste for fine meat Witch is the fact. And as such ort praps to have confined my attentions to butcherin Whereby I mite sit cumfitable in my own parler But a 200 ginny Picter, and a greasy blue jacket & red nite cap don't match no how. Howsumever I shant put in agin At least not till sich time as theres a Hart Union for Hagriculture and a raffle for a Prize Ox.

I remane

Sur

Your verry humbel sarvent,

Richard Carnaby.

P.S.—Since ritin the abuv, Jones have found a custumer, on condition of paintin some annimals into the landskip, whereby the Picter stands a chance of showing off, on the outside of a Wild Beast Carrywan.

REVIEW.

Fifty Days on Board a Slaver.—By the Rev. Pascoe Grenfell Hill. Murray.

On the 12th of February 1843, the Cleopatra frigate, Captain Wyvill, captured, off Fogo, a Brazilian slave ship, and the prize being ordered to the Cape of Good Hope, the chaplain of the frigate volunteered his services as interpreter

between the negroes and the persons appointed to take charge of them—a Spaniard, and a Portuguese cook. Hence this unpretending little volume, but valuable as the sketch book of an intelligent observer, who paints the scenes he witnessed without aiming at those violent effects which some designers have introduced into their views of the Slave Trade. The picture, in its true tints, is quite sombre enough, in spite of that temporary gleam of sunshine which falls on the act of rescue, and the dropping fetters. Strange was the scene when the captors boarded the Progresso,—no relation, of course, to the Christian one of Bunyan.

"The deck was crowded to the utmost with naked negroes, to the number, as stated in her papers, of 450, in almost riotous confusion, having revolted, before our arrival, against their late masters; who, on their part, also showed strong excitement, from feelings, it may be supposed, of no pleasant nature. The negroes, a meagre, famished-looking throng, having broken through all control, had seized everything to which they had a fancy in the vessel; some with hands full of 'farinha,' the powdered root of the mandroe or cassava; others with large pieces of pork and beef, having broken open the casks; and some had taken fowls from the coops, which they devoured raw. Many were busily dipping rags, fastened to bits of string, into the water-casks; and, unhappily, there were some who, by a like method, got at the contents of a cask of 'aguardiente,' fiery Brazilian rum, of which they drank to excess. The addition of our boats' crews to this crowd left hardly room to move on the deck. The shrill hubbub of noises, which I cannot attempt to describe, expressive, however, of the wildest joy, thrilled on the ear, mingled with the clank of the iron, as they were knocking off their fetters on every side. It seemed that, from the moment the first ball was fired, they had been actively employed in thus freeing themselves, in which our men were not slow in lending their assistance. I counted but thirty shackled together in pairs; but many more pairs of shackles were found below. We were not left an instant in doubt as to the light in which they viewed us. They crawled in crowds, and rubbed caressingly our feet and clothes with their hands, even rolling themselves, as far as room allowed, on the deck before us. And when they saw the crew of the vessel rather unceremoniously sent over the side into the boat which was to take them prisoners to the frigate, they sent up a long, universal shout of triumph and delight."

Alas! this bright gleam was transient as the flash of the

gun which brought-to the Progresso! During the first watch all went smoothly and regularly, as if it had been one of Dent's or Savory's—the water calm, and the liberated negroes lying in quietness about the deck,—their slender supple limbs entwining, as the author describes, in surprisingly small compass, so that they resembled, in the moonlight, confused piles of arms and legs, rather than distinct human forms. But the weather was getting blacker, even for the liberated blacks.

"About one hour after midnight the sky began to gather clouds, and a have overspread the horizon to windward. A squall approached, of which I and others, who laid down on the deck, received warning by a few heavy drops of rain. Then ensued a scene the horrors of which it is impossible to depict. The hands having to shorten sail suddenly, uncertain as to the force of the squall, found the poor helpless creatures lying about the deck an obstruction to getting at the ropes and doing what was required. This caused the order to send them all below, which was immediately obeyed. The night, however, being intensely hot and close, 400 wretched beings thus crammed into a hold 12 yards in length, 7 in breadth, and only 3½ feet in height, speedily began to make an effort to re-issue to the open air. Being thrust back, and striving the more to get out, the after-hatch was forced down on them. Over the other hatchway, in the fore-part of the vessel, a wooden grating was fastened. To this, the sole inlet for the air, the suffocating heat of the hold, and, perhaps, panic from the strangeness of their situation, made them press; and thus great part of the space below was rendered useless. They crowded to the grating, and, clinging to it for air, completely barred its entrance. They strove to force their way through apertures, in length 14 inches, and barely 6 inches in breadth, and, in some instances, succeeded. The cries, the heat,—I may say, without exaggeration, the smoke, of their torment,—which ascended, can be compared to nothing earthly. One of the Spaniards gave warning that the consequence would be 'many deaths.'—'Mañana habrá muchos muertos.'"

"*Thursday, April 13th* (*Holy Thursday*).—The Spaniard's prediction of last night, this morning was fearfully verified. Fifty-four crushed and mangled corpses lifted up from the slave-deck have been brought to the gangway and thrown overboard. Some were emaciated from disease; many, bruised and bloody. Antonio tells me that some were found strangled, their hands still grasping each other's throats, and tongues protruding from their mouths. The bowels of one were crushed out. They had been trampled to death for the most part, the weaker under the feet of

the stronger, in the madness and torment of suffocation from crowd and heat. It was a horrid sight, as they passed one by one—the stiff distorted limbs smeared with blood and filth—to be cast into the sea. Some, still quivering, were laid on the deck to die, salt water thrown on them to revive them, and a little fresh water poured into their mouths. Antonio reminded me of his last night's warning, 'Ya se lo dixè anoche.' He actively employed himself, with his comrade Sebastian, in attendance on the wretched living beings now released from their confinement below; distributing to them their morning meal of 'farinha,' and their allowance of water, rather more than half a pint to each, which they grasped with inconceivable eagerness, some bending their knees to the deck, to avoid the risk of losing any of the liquid by unsteady footing, their throats, doubtless, parched to the utmost with crying and yelling through the night."

And now, gentle reader, with those yells still in your mind's ear, and those parched wretches still in your mind's eye, be pleased, by way of contrast, to look over the following bill of fare,—no, unfair—with its disproportionate provision for human thirst.

"The cabin stores are profuse; lockers filled with ale and porter; barrels of wine; liqueurs of various sorts; macaroni, vermicelli, tapioca of the finest kind; cases of English pickles, each containing twelve jars; boxes of cigars; muscatel raisins, tamarinds, almonds, walnuts, &c., &c. The coops on deck are crammed with fowls and ducks, and there are eleven pigs."

If the master of those liquid cabin stores did not deserve the fate of Tantalus, or the vinous drowning of Clarence, we will forego malt-liquors, and the juice of the grape. Be it remembered that the pores of the black skin give off moisture with a peculiar liberality, and accordingly, as might be expected, they require a proportionate supply of liquid.

"The great physical suffering of all seems to be a raging, unquenchable thirst. They eagerly catch the drippings from the sails after a shower; apply their lips to the wet masts; and crawl to the coops to share the supply placed there for the fowls. I have remarked some of the sick licking the deck, when washed with salt water."

In fact, the only delinquencies of the negroes consist in stealing water; involving not only the loss of the water

extracted, according to Mr. Hill, but the corruption of that which remains, by the foul rags which they dip into the casks to obtain it.

"*Friday, May 5.*—The 'Capitaõ Pequenino,' who bears also the Portuguese name of 'Luiz,' came quietly to me this evening, and said, 'Senhor, estaõ roubando aguardiente abaxo.'—'They are stealing brandy below.' I could not comprehend how this could be, as all the brandy in the hold had been started at the commencement of the voyage, to prevent mischief. Having reported it to the Lieutenant, I accompanied the two Spaniards to the slave-deck, and surprised a large party of the negroes, busily drawing up, by means of old rags, as usual, the contents of two barrels. One of these proved to be of water, and another smaller one, which Luiz supposed to be aguardiente, contained vinegar. Summary punishment was inflicted on eight, who were taken in the fact. They received by moonlight about eighteen lashes each, and were coupled in shackles previously to being sent back into the hold. Thus, as in many other fine beginnings, the end but ill corresponds with the 'early promise.' The sound of knocking off their irons, which thrilled so musically on the ear when we boarded the prize, terminates in the clank of riveting them on again, with the accompaniment of flogging. The result of their offence is certainly highly provoking, when, as is sometimes the case, instead of pure water, we draw up from the casks their putrid rags; on the other hand, none can tell, save he who has tried, the pangs of thirst which may excite them in that heated hold, many of them fevered by mortal disease."

A venial theft, enforced no doubt by stern physical necessity; for, in the article of food, they appear to be strictly conscientious, with a touch of the natural gentleman—if, indeed, the first gentleman in the world was not a negro, as is maintained, we believe, by Adam Black of Edinburgh, and others.

"There is a natural good breeding frequently to be remarked among the negroes, which one might little expect. They sometimes come aft, on seeing us first appear on deck in the morning, and bend the knee by way of salutation. Their manner of returning thanks for any little present of food or water is by a stamp on the deck, and a scrape of the foot backwards, and they seldom fail, however weak, to make this acknowledgment, though it cost them an effort to rise for the purpose. The women make a curtsey, bowing their knees forwards so as nearly to touch the ground. In the partition of the small pieces of beef in their tubs of farinha, the most perfect fair dealing is always observed. One of each little party takes the

whole into his hands, and distributes two or three bits, as the number allows, to each, and, should there be any remainder after the division, pulls it into yet smaller pieces, and hands them round with equal impartiality. After a meal they express general satisfaction by a clapping of hands; a mode also used by some among them of asking a favour, or begging pardon for a fault."

And, now, let it not be set down to the discredit of the savage race and natural good manners, if their best black behaviour relaxes under trials which would probably disturb the good conduct of even white civilisation. Morals may well change colour in an atmosphere which tarnishes the purest metals.

"At the outset of our voyage, it was comparatively trifling, and I suffered little inconvenience from venturing down on the slave-deck, to see what the matter was, when any extraordinary noise or outcries occurred. It is superfluous now to make this descent, in order to inhale its atmosphere, which pervades every part of the vessel, and in our after-cabin is almost intolerable. Gold lace and silver articles, though kept in drawers or japanned cases, have turned quite black, through this state of the air.

* * * *

"Disorder, I think, in every sense, is on the increase among the unhappy blacks. During the late fine weather, they have spent the sunny hours of the day on deck, but when below, their cries are incessant day and night. Thinned as their numbers are by death, there is no longer narrowness of room, but increasing sickness and misery make the survivors more hard and unfeeling, and they fight and bruise one another more than formerly. Little Catula, the finest among them, who received a bite in the leg about six weeks since, getting continual blows and knocks, the wound has now become a deep-spreading ulcer. Another fine intelligent lad has been lately severely bitten in the head. Others have the heel, the great toe, the ankle-joint, nearly bitten through; and worse injuries than these, too savage to mention, have been inflicted. Madness, the distraction of despair, seems to possess them."

The number of deaths, during the voyage of fifty days, appears to have been 163, but the real number who died on board was 175, besides 14 more who expired on shore, out of a total of 397—a fearful waste of human life. As a set-off, however, the crew of the Slaver escaped with as much im-

punity as if they had only committed a literary piracy; and certainly a very *white* fate was reserved for the skipper.

"The captain, whom they reported to have perished in the surf near Quilimane, but who was concealed among them, embarked for Rio, with four of his companions, in an English brig, having obtained money, as has been since discovered, from an English mercantile house in Cape Town."

That the Slave Trade should exist at all in the nineteenth century is a great fact, to the disgrace of civilisation. No Christian nation ought to accredit a representative of human nature to a Court that connives at such a detestable traffic; or to acknowledge, even as foreign relations, those repudiators, who disown their brotherhood to any of the sons of Adam!

1844.

[*Continued.*]

THE HOUSE OF MOURNING.

A FARCE.

SCENE.—*A street at the west end of London. Enter* SQUIRE HAMPER *and his* Lady, *personages rather of the rustic order, recently come up from the family seat in Hampshire.*

Squire. WELL, Ma'am, I hope you've had shopping enough.

Lady. Almost. Only one more—O! there it is, over the way.

Squire. What, the one yonder? Why, it's all raven gray, picked out with black; and a hatchment over the door. What can you want at an undertaker's?

Lady. An undertaker's!—no such thing. Look at the goods in the window.

Squire. O, shawls and gowns! A foreign haberdasher's, I suppose, and that's the French for it. Mason de Dool?

Lady. Hush! Don't expose your ignorance in the street; everybody knows French at the West End. It means the House of Mourning.

Squire. What, the one mentioned in the Bible?

Lady. No—no—dear me!—no. I tell you it's a mourning establishment.

Squire. O, I understand. The master's dead, and the shop's put into black for him. The last new-fangled mode, I suppose, instead of the old-fashioned one of putting up the shutters.

Lady. Nonsense! It's a shop to buy black things at.

Squire. Humph! And pray, Ma'am, what do *you* want with black things? There's nobody dead belonging to us, as I know of, nor like to be.

Lady. Well; and what then? Is there any harm in just looking at their things—for I'm not going to buy. What did we come up to town for?

Squire. Why, for a bit of a holiday, and to see the sights, to be sure.

Lady. Well, and that black shop is one of them, at least for a female. It's quite a new thing, they say, just come over from Paris; and I want to go in and pretend to cheapen something, just out of curiosity.

Squire. Yes, and pay for peeping. For in course you must buy after tumbling over their whole stock.

Lady. By no means—or only some trifle—a penn'orth of black pins—or the like. If I did purchase a black gown, it is always useful to have by one.

Squire. Yes—or a widow's cap. Perhaps, Ma'am, you're in hopes?

Lady. La, Jacob, don't be foolish! Many ladies wear black for economy, as well as for relations. But I only want to inspect—for they do say, what with foreign tastiness, and our own modern refinements, there's great improvements in mourning.

Squire. Humph—and I suppose a new-fashioned way of crying.

Lady. New fiddlesticks! It's very well known the Parisians always did out-do us in dress; and in course go into black more elegantly than we do.

Squire. No doubt, Ma'am—and fret in a vastly superior manner.

Lady. No, no. I don't say that. Grief's grief all the world over. But as regards costume, the French certainly do have a style that entitles them to set the fashion to us in such matters.

Squire. Can't say. I'm no judge.

Lady. In course not. They're women's matters, and should be left to our sex.

Squire. Well, well, come along, then! But stop. Ask your pardon, Sir (*to a passenger*), would you oblige me with the English of that Greek or Latin, yonder, under the hatchment?

Stranger. O, certainly—"Mors Janua Vitæ"—let me see—it means, Jane, between life and death.

Squire. Thankee, Sir, thankee. I'll do as much for you when you come into our parts. Poor Jane! So it may come, mayhap, to be a real house of mourning after all!

[*The Squire and his Lady cross over the road and enter the shop, where ebony chairs are placed for them by a person in a full suit of sables, very like Hamlet, minus the cloak and the hat and feathers. A young man, also in black, speaks across the counter with the solemn air and tone of a clergyman at a funeral.*

May I have the melancholy pleasure of serving you, Madam?

Lady. I wish, Sir, to look at some mourning.

Shopm. Certainly, by all means. A relict, I presume?

Lady. Yes; a widow, Sir. A poor friend of mine, who has lost her husband.

Shopm. Exactly so—for a deceased partner. How deep

would you choose to go, Ma'am? Do you wish to be very poignant?

Lady. Why, I suppose crape and bombazine, unless they're gone out of fashion. But you had better show me some different sorts.

Shopm. Certainly, by all means. We have a very extensive assortment, whether for family, Court, or complimentary mourning, including the last novelties from the Continent.

Lady. Yes, I should like to see *them.*

Shopm. Certainly. Here is one, Ma'am, just imported—a Widow's Silk—*watered,* as you perceive, to match the sentiment. It is called the "Inconsolable;" and is very much in vogue in Paris for matrimonial bereavements.

Squire. Looks rather flimsy, though. Not likely to last long—eh, Sir?

Shopm. A little slight, Sir—rather a delicate texture. But mourning ought not to last for ever, Sir.

Squire. No, it seldom does; especially the violent sorts.

Lady. La! Jacob, do hold your tongue; what do you know about fashionable affliction? But never mind him, Sir; it's only his way.

Shopm. Certainly—by all means. As to mourning, Ma'am, there has been a great deal, a very great deal indeed, this season, and several new fabrics have been introduced, to meet the demand for fashionable tribulation.

Lady. And all in the French style?

Shopm. Certainly—of course, Ma'am. They excel in the *funèbre.* Here, for instance, is an article for the deeply afflicted. A black crape, expressly adapted to the profound style of mourning,—makes up very sombre, and interesting.

Lady. I dare say it does, Sir.

Shopm. Would you allow me, Ma'am, to cut off a dress?

Squire. You had better cut *me* off first.

Shopm. Certainly, Sir—by all means. Or, if you would prefer a velvet—Ma'am—

Lady. Is it proper, Sir, to mourn in velvet?

Shopm. O quite!—certainly. Just coming in. Now, here is a very rich one—real Genoa—and a splendid black. We call it the Luxury of Woe.

Lady. Very expensive, of course?

Shopm. Only eighteen shillings a yard, and a superb quality; in short, fit for the handsomest style of domestic calamity.

Squire. Whereby, I suppose, sorrow gets more superfine as it goes upwards in life?

Shopm. Certainly—yes, Sir—by all means—at least, a finer texture. The mourning of poor people is very coarse—very—quite different from that of persons of quality. Canvas to crape, Sir?

Lady. To be sure it is! And as to the change of dress, Sir, I suppose you have a great variety of half-mourning?

Shopm. O, infinite,—the largest stock in town! Full, and half, and quarter, and half-quarter mourning, shaded off, if I may say so, like an India-ink drawing, from a grief *prononcé* to the slightest *nuance* of regret.

Lady. Then, Sir, please to let me see some Half Mourning.

Shopm. Certainly. But the gentleman opposite superintends the Intermediate Sorrow Department.

Squire. What the young fellow yonder in pepper-and-salt?

Shopm. Yes, Sir; in the suit of gray. (*Calls across.*) Mr. Dawe, show the Neutral Tints!

[*The Squire and his Lady cross the shop and take seats vis-à-vis; Mr. Dawe, who affects the pensive rather than the solemn,*

Shopm. You wish to inspect some Half Mourning, madam?

Lady. Yes—the newest patterns.

Shopm. Precisely—in the second stage of distress. As such, Ma'am, allow me to recommend this satin—intended for grief when it has subsided,—alleviated you see, Ma'am, from a dead black to a dull lead colour!

Squire. As a black horse alleviates into a gray one, after he's clipped!

Shopm. Exactly so, Sir. A Parisian novelty, Ma'am. It's called "Settled Grief," and is very much worn by ladies of a certain age, who do not intend to embrace Hymen a second time.

Squire. Old women, mayhap, about seventy.

Shop. Exactly so, Sir,—or thereabouts. Not but what some ladies, Ma'am, set in for sorrow much earlier:—indeed, in the prime of life: and for such cases, it's very durable wear.

Lady. Yes; it feels very stout.

Shopm. But perhaps, Madam, that is too *lugubre*. Now, here is another—not exactly black, but shot with a warmish tint, to suit a woe moderated by time. We have sold several pieces of it. That little *nuance de rose* in it—the French call it a Gleam of Comfort—is very attractive.

Squire. No doubt; and would be still more taking, if so be it was violet colour at once, like the mourning of the Chinese.

Shopm. Yes, Sir. I believe that is the fashionable colour at Pekin. Now here, Ma'am, is a sweet pretty article, quite new. A morning dress for the Funeral Promenade. The French ladies go in them to Père la Chaise.

Squire. What's that—a chaise and pair?

Shopm. Excuse me; no, Sir. By your leave it's a scene of rural interment, near Paris. A black cypress sprig, you see, Ma'am, on a stone-colour ground, harmonises beautifully with the monuments and epitaphs. We sold two this very morning—one to Norwood, and one to Kensal Green. We consider it the happiest pattern of the season.

Squire. Yes; some people are very happy in it, no doubt.

Shopm. No doubt, Sir. There's a charm in melancholy, Sir. I'm fond of the pensive myself. But possibly, Madam, you would prefer something still more in the transition state, as we call it, from grave to gay. In that case, I would recommend this lavender Ducape, with only just a *souvenir* of sorrow in it—the slightest tinge of mourning, to distinguish it from the garb of pleasure. Permit me to put aside a dress for you.

Lady. Why, no—not at present. I am not going into mourning myself; but a friend, who has just been left with a large family——

Shopm. Oh, I understand;—and you desire to see an appropriate style of costume for the juvenile branches, when sorrow their young days has shaded. Of course, a milder degree of mourning than for adults. Black would be precocious. This, Ma'am, for instance—a dark pattern on gray; an interesting dress, Ma'am, for a little girl, just initiated in the vale of tears.

Squire. Poor thing!

Shopm. Precisely, so, Sir,—only eighteen pence a yard, Ma'am—and warranted to wash.—Possibly you would require the whole piece?

Lady. Why no—I must first consult the Mama. And that reminds me to look at some widow's caps.

Shopm. Very good, Ma'am. The Coiffure department is backwards—if you would have the goodness to step that way.—

[*The Lady, followed by the Squire, walks into a room at the back of the shop:—the walls are hung with black, and on each of the three sides is a looking-glass, in a black frame, multiplying infinitely the reflections of the widows' caps, displayed on stands on the central table. A show-woman in deep mourning is in attendance.*

Show. Your melancholy pleasure, Ma'am?

Lady. Widow's caps.

Squire. Humph!—that's plump any how!

Show. This is the newest style, Ma'am—

Lady. Bless me! for a widow!—Isn't it rather, you know, rather a little,—

Squire. Rather frisky in its frilligigs!

Show. Not for the mode, Ma'am. Affliction is very much modernised, and admits more *goût* than formerly. Some ladies indeed for their morning grief wear rather a plainer cap,—but for evening sorrow, this is not at all too *ornée.* French taste has introduced very considerable alleviations—for example, the *sympathiser*—

Squire. Where is he?

Show. This muslin *ruche,* Ma'am, instead of the plain band.

Lady. Yes; a very great improvement, certainly.

Show. Would you like to try it, Ma'am?

Lady. No, not at present. I am only inquiring for a friend—Pray what are those?

Show. Worked handkerchiefs, Ma'am. Here is a lovely pattern—all done by hand,—an exquisite piece of work—

Squire. Better than a noisy one!

Show. Here is another, Ma'am,—the last novelty. The *Larmoyante*—with a fringe of artificial tears, you perceive, in mock pearl. A sweet pretty idea, Ma'am.

Squire. But rather scrubby, I should think, for the eyes.

Show. O dear, no, Sir!—if you mean wiping. The wet style of grief is quite gone out—quite!

Squire. O! and a dry cry is the genteel thing. But, come, Ma'am, come, or we shall be too late for the other Exhibitions.

[*The Squire and his Lady leave the shop: on getting into the street, he turns round, and takes a long last look at the premises.*

Squire. Humph! And so that's a Mason de Dool! Well, if it's all the same to you, Ma'am, I'd rather die in the country, and be universally lamented, after the old fashion—for, as to London, what with the new French modes of mourning, and the "Try Warren" style of blacking the premises, it do seem to me that, before long, all sorrow will be sham Abram, and the House of Mourning a regular Farce!

MAGNETIC MUSINGS.

SCEPTICAL, as we have always been, as to the imputed miracles of Phreno-Magnetism, the interests of science and truth demand the insertion of the following case, vouched for, as it is, by a medical gentleman, prepared to be answerable for unquestionable facts.

It is proper to recall beforehand, that Coleridge published a Poetical Fragment, called Kubla Khan, which he dreamt during a sleep obviously magnetic. The Poet, indeed, implies as much, by calling the piece a Psychological Curiosity; which he would scarcely have done, if his verses had been merely composed, like a majority of modern poems, during a common doze. But whoever reads that splendid Fragment, will recognise from its tone, that it was inspired, in a fit of somnambulism, under the influence of which he ascended to the top of Parnassus, as some persons, in the same state, have climbed to the roof of the house.

In the present instance, the Improvisatrice is a Mrs. Z—, a woman, in her ordinary or waking state, of rather a prosaic turn than otherwise; so much so, that it cannot be traced

that she ever attempted, even in a valentine, to throw her sentiments into rhyme. Certain phrenological developments, however, suggested to the family physician that the poetical faculty had a local habitation in her cerebrum, and only awaited the touch of the magician to awaken its tones. Accordingly, having thrown her, by the usual *passes*, into a mesmeric state, he placed his forefinger on the organ of Extempore Composition, whereupon she immediately improvised the following verses :—

PASSING my brow, and passing my eyes,
And passing lower with devious range,
Passing my chest,
And passing the rest,
I feel a something passing strange !

Over my soul there seems to pass
A middle state of life or death,
And I almost seem to feel, alas !
That I am drawing my passing breath !
And, methinks I hear the passing-bell ;
But, Mr. Passmore, that reverend elf,
Gives me a pass that I know well,
A sort of passport to Heaven itself !

Passing my brow, and passing my eye,
And passing lower, with devious range,
Passing my chest,
And passing the rest,
I feel a something passing strange !

Oh, Mr. Eyre, Lieutenant dear !
Oh ! Lady Sale, thou gallant lass !

I know for certain that ye are near,
For I feel, I feel, the Khyber Pass!
But no—'tis Brockedon passes my brow,
And I'm in the Alpine Passes now,
With icy valleys, and snowy crests,
Whereon the passing vapour rests;
And guide and English traveller pass,
Each on a very passable ass!

Passing my ear and passing my eye!
O joy! what pastoral meads I spy,
Full of lambs that frisk and feed
While the Pastor plays on his rustic reed—
To the very best of his humble ability,
Piping ever shrill and loud,
But oh! what new magnetic cloud
Passes over my passability!

Over my soul there seems to pass
A middle state of life or death
And I almost seem to feel, alas!
That I am drawing my passing breath.
No more prospects bright and sunny,
No more chance of pleasant cheer,
No more hope of passing money—
I feel the pass of the Overseer!

THE ECHO.

It would require the voices of fifty echoes to respond to the queries, hints, suggestions, and advice of innumerable correspondents and critics, on our first number. Only on one point has there been a general concurrence, in deference to which the cover is printed in black, for the million, instead of red for the vermilion, a change the eyes of Europe, we hope, will duly appreciate.

A Correspondent from Glasgow, dating on the 12th January, complains that copies were then not delivered in that city to several subscribers. The delay, in such cases, rests with the parties who took the orders; the Magazine having been ready for delivery on the morning of the 30th December, in time for the trade parcels. The same answer will apply to a communication from Liverpool.

We fear X. writes his poetry on the railroad—his style is so level. It does not rise an inch in the mile.

Who can wonder at nocturnal incendiarism, when a Scotchman is allowed to publicly advertise a Night with Burns?

"*An Inquirer*," who asks the origin of opening Parliament in person, is respectfully referred to the learned in gingerbread at the Preparatory School.

It is quite true that the wild beasts at the Zoological are opposed to any embankment of the Thames, which they consider will Trench on their prerogatives.

We are unable to satisfy our correspondent with information on the best mode of getting his Waste Inclosure Bill passed. He should go to the commons.

"*A Young Lady*," who asks us if we will accept "some lines," will be good enough to say what lines she means; are they the Birmingham or Midland Counties?

Our correspondent's joke on the word "grateful" is not new. It was invented contemporaneously with Dr. Arnott's stoves. The epigram is not within our range.

Our poetical friend will, we think, admit that no verse can be grander than the universe.

"An observer of the clouds," who has remarked the glass to rise during wet, is informed, that the phenomenon is peculiar to Glass-go.

THE KEY.

A MOORISH ROMANCE.

"On the east coast, towards Tunis, the Moors still preserve the keys of their ancestors' houses in Spain; to which country they still express the hopes of one day returning, and again planting the crescent on the ancient walls of the Alhambra."—SCOTT'S *Travels in Morocco and Algiers*.

"Is Spain cloven in such a manner as to want closing?"

SANCHO PANZA.

THE Moor leans on his cushion,
With the pipe between his lips;
And still at frequent intervals
The sweet sherbét he sips;
But, spite of lulling vapour
And the sober cooling cup,
The spirit of the swarthy Moor
Is fiercely kindling up!

One hand is on his pistol,
On its ornamented stock,
While his finger feels the trigger
And is busy with the lock—
The other seeks his ataghan,
And clasps its jewell'd hilt—
Oh! much of gore in days of yore
That crooked blade has spilt!

His brows are knit, his eyes of jet
In vivid blackness roll,
And gleam with fatal flashes
Like the fire-damp of the coal;
His jaws are set, and through his teeth
He draws a savage breath,
As if about to raise the shout
Of Victory or Death!

For why? the last Zebeck that came
And moor'd within the Mole,
Such tidings unto Tunis brought
As stir his very soul—
The cruel jar of civil war,
The sad and stormy reign,
That blackens like a thunder cloud
The sunny land of Spain!

No strife of glorious Chivalry,
For honour's gain or loss,
Nor yet that ancient rivalry,
The Crescent with the Cross.
No charge of gallant Paladins
On Moslems stern and stanch;

But Christians shedding Christian blood
Beneath the olive's branch!

A war of horrid parricide,
And brother killing brother;
Yea, like to "dogs and sons of dogs
That worry one another.
But let them bite and tear and fight,
The more the Kaffers slay,
The sooner Hagar's swarming sons
Shall make the land a prey!

The sooner shall the Moor behold
Th' Alhambra's pile again;
And those who pined in Barbary
Shall shout for joy in Spain—
The sooner shall the Crescent wave
On dear Granada's walls:
And proud Mohammed Ali sit
Within his father's halls!

"Alla-il-alla!" tiger-like
Up springs the swarthy Moor,
And, with a wide and hasty stride,
Steps o'er the marble floor;
Across the hall, till from the wall,
Where such quaint patterns be,
With eager hand he snatches down
An old and massive Key!

A massive Key of curious shape,
And dark with dirt and rust,

And well three weary centuries
The metal might encrust!
For since the King Boabdil fell
Before the native stock,
That ancient Key, so quaint to see,
Hath never been in lock.

Brought over by the Saracens
Who fled across the main,
A token of the secret hope
Of going back again;
From race to race, from hand to hand,
From house to house it pass'd;
O will it ever, ever ope
The Palace gate at last?

Three hundred years and fifty-two
On post and wall it hung—
Three hundred years and fifty-two
A dream to old and young;
But now a brighter destiny
The Prophet's will accords:
The time is come to scour the rust,
And lubricate the wards.

For should the Moor with sword and lance
At Algesiras land,
Where is the bold Bernardo now
Their progress to withstand?
To Burgos should the Moslem come,
Where is the noble Cid
Five royal crowns to topple down
As gallant Diaz did?

Hath Xeres any Pounder now,
When other weapons fail,
With club to thrash invaders rash,
Like barley with a flail?
Hath Seville any Perez still,
To lay his clusters low,
And ride with seven turbans green
Around his saddle-bow?

No! never more shall Europe see
Such Heroes brave and bold,
Such Valour, Faith, and Loyalty,
As used to shine of old!
No longer to one battle cry
United Spaniards run,
And with their thronging spears uphold
The Virgin and her Son!

From Cadiz Bay to rough Biscay
Internal discord dwells,
And Barcelona bears the scars
Of Spanish shot and shells.
The fleets decline, the merchants pine
For want of foreign trade;
And gold is scant; and Alicante
Is seal'd by strict blockade!

The loyal fly, and Valour falls,
Opposed by court intrigue;
But treachery and traitors thrive,
Upheld by foreign league;
While factions seeking private ends
By turns usurping reign—

Well may the dreaming, scheming Moor
Exulting point to Spain!

Well may he cleanse the rusty Key
With Afric sand and oil,
And hope an Andalusian home
Shall recompense the toil!
Well may he swear the Moorish spear
Through wild Castile shall sweep,
And where the Catalonian sowed
The Saracen shall reap!

Well may he vow to spurn the Cross
Beneath the Arab hoof,
And plant the Crescent yet again
Above th' Alhambra's roof—
When those from whom St. Jago's name
In chorus once arose,
Are shouting Faction's battle-cries,
And Spain forgets to "Close!"

Well may he swear his ataghan
Shall rout the traitor swarm,
And carve them into Arabesques
That show no human form—
The blame be theirs whose bloody feuds
Invite the savage Moor,
And tempt him with the ancient Key
To seek the ancient door!

THE MASONIC SECRET.

AN EXTRAVAGANZA.

CHAPTER I.

It shall all out!

"If it does, I'll be chisell'd!" cries a burly Mason, flourishing the very tool that gave rise to the verb.

"Stop his mouth with mortar!" shouts a fellow of the association, called Free, perhaps from being associated with free-stone.

"Sew it up, like a ferret's," squeaks a Cross-Legged Knight,—in common parlance a Tailor.

"Pitch into him, like bricks," roars an Apprentice, of the ancient Babylonian order of Builders.

"Give him a clod with your hod," bellows an Irish Labourer in the Lodge of Harmony.

"Pitch him off the Mysterious Ladder!" puts in a member of the same masonry, renowned for making wooden tombstones.

"Throw the lime in his eyes!"

"Brain him with the mallet!"

"Stab him with the compasses!"

"Square at him!"

"Level him!"

"Dig into him with the trowel!"

"Lay a first stone on him," suggests a noble Grand Master, who has officiated at such a ceremony, and is as proud by the way of laying the stone—as if he has hatched the building.

"Split him!" ejaculates a Grand Warden—of course a repeal one.

"Bite him!" growls a Purple Badger.

"Worry him!" snarls a Blue ditto.

"Let's strangle him with our apron strings——"

"Or give him the sledge-hammer!" puts in a Master Tyler, a descendant, of course, of the famous Wat.

"Over the bridge with him——" cries a Grand Arch.

"Into my barge!" shouts a Master of the Craft.

"Hit him in the Temple!" says a Brother in Solomon's spectacles.

"Hang him!" screams one of the "Mystic Tie."

"Peek out his eyes—and reep up his sanguinary poitrine!" mutters a foreign member of the Eagle and Pelican.

"Whip him with the Rod of Moses!" recommends a Jewish convertite.

"Na, na; wi' the Triple *Taws!*" whispers a masonic Scotchman.

"Stone him! stone him!" shrieks a member of the Lodge of St. Stephen.

"Pitch him down the 'Winding Staircase'——"

"And out of the House of Humanity beyond its Porch and Pillars!"

"Beyond the Pales of Society."

"And its 'Geometrical Gate,'" says the masonic keeper of that Lodge, commonly called the Porter's.

"Kick him! Stick him! Bother him! Smother him! Hit him! Split him! Throttle him! Bottle him! Pound him! Confound him! Drat him! Go at him! Floor him! Score him! Scrag him! Gag him! Thrash him! Smash him! Walk into him! Run him through!"—That's plain English at any rate.

"Gouge him! Tar and feather him! Lynch him! Bark

him! Mark him! Chaw him up! Be worse than a bear to him, and lick him into no shape at all!"—That's American!

"Boke his bipe down his windbipe!"—That's German.

"Break him on one wheel! Blow his head off at one blow! A la lanterne!"—That's French. "Let him look through the little window of Saint Guillotine."

"Knout him!"—That's Russian.

"Cow-hide him; and let the flies blow his wounds!"—That's Brazilian.

"Shackle him; tackle him; barrel him up, and overboard with him!"—That's Portuguese.

"Rack him! Thumb-screw him!"—That's Spanish.

"Put him into the iron boots."—That's Scotch.

"Poison him by instalments!"—That's Italian.

"Kill him entirely; and twice over!"—That's Irish, of course.

"Cut off his eyelids—boil him in oil—broil him on a gridiron—crucify him head downwards—drench him with melted lead—blow him away from a gun—starve him—roll him in a hogshead of cutlery—flay him alive—roast him at a slow fire—tear him in pieces by wild horses—give him a bed of steel—impale him—scalp him—bastinado him—cold press him—flog him—picket him—put him into solitary confinement—send him to the tread-mill—tie a tight-rope round his forehead—bake him in a brazen bull—throw him into a vault with adders and scorpions—cast him into the lion's den—bury him alive—keelhaul him—make him walk the plank!"

[Merciful Heaven! How many personal inconveniences and bodily discomforts have human creatures invented for each other? What bitter draughts and cruel operations, as a set-off against the charitable prescriptions and benevolent inflictions of medicine and surgery!]

"Choke him! Break his jaw! Tear his tongue out with

pincers! Silence him with the poker! Stop his mouth with the table-cloth! Gag him with a red-hot respirator!"

"Build him up in a wall!"—That should be the voice of a Mason, at any rate.

But no matter; the Bag is my own, if the Cat isn't. I was never sworn to secresy; and so out it shall come, whoever gets clawed for it!

CHAPTER II.

"MERCY on us!" ejaculates Fear, his lank locks stiffening into a hair-brush, or more like a hearth-broom, his knees knocking together, his jaws clattering like castanets, and shattering every word into broken English. "Would you really dare to disclose the Free-Mason's secret? Consider what an ancient body they are—as old as Adam and Eve—at least, when they wore aprons. And then such architects! some say they built the Pyramids, and Stonehenge, let alone Solomon's Temple."

"Yes, as much as Mr. Pecksniff did!"

"Hush! pray hush; walls have ears, you know. For my part, if there's any men I'm afraid of, it's the Free-Masons. They certainly do know more than other people. For instance, there's the toad in a hole——"

"What, the batter-pudding?"

"No; but a toad in the very middle of a block of stone or marble, where he has been for a thousand years, and as brisk as ever. How he got there, or lived so long without food, nobody knows, unless it's the Masons. Some think it's their Secret."

"Then I should like to know it, for it's the cheapest style of boarding and lodging in the world."

"Hush! don't joke. There's perhaps a Brother listening. Who knows? They're very mysterious. Let's whisper. Did you ever read of the Secret Assassins and the Vehme Gericht?"

"Yes, in 'Anne of Gierstein.'"

"Humph! then you know what I mean. Come closer; still closer. There *was* a man, I've heard—an American—who blabbed the Secret, and was never seen or heard of afterwards. Never!"

"But that story was denied."

"Well, it may have been, but I believe it. At any rate, if they don't take one's life, they can save or spare it. There was a story in the last 'Freemason's Quarterly Review'—stop, here it is:—

"Many have probably heard of the French officer in the battle of Waterloo, who was so badly wounded that he was unable to keep up with his regiment; and in that situation was discovered by a Scotch Highlander of the British army; who, with his blood-stained weapon drawn, his teeth clenched, and his eyes flashing fire, put spurs to his horse, and galloped up to despatch him; but just as he was on the point of striking the fatal blow, the officer gave a Masonic sign of distress—it was well understood by the Scotsman, whose giant arm was immediately unnerved; love and sympathy were depicted in his countenance; and, as he turned his horse to ride off, was heard to say, 'The Lord bless and protect thee, my Brother!'"

"There, what do you think of it?"

"Why, I think there was something very inconsistent in the affair; that the two professions are quite incompatible with each other. A Mason-Soldier is as great an anomaly as a Fighting Quaker; nay, of the two, the 'brain spattering, windpipe-slitting art' must become a Brother even less than a Friend. And, besides, it is too like 'Exclusive Dealing.' As a lover of fair play, I cannot admire the bestowing mercy and benediction on one head, and the curse and the sabre on another; for, of course, the next poor Frenchman who could not give the sign was carved into Scotch collops."

"Hush—hush—pray speak lower. I'm all of a tremble."

"Pshaw! let the whole world hear me. I say, a Mason ought not to be in such a scene at all. I think I see him with his teeth clenched—his eyes flashing fire—hewing—slashing—stabbing—running a poor fellow-Christian clean through the body with a 'There! Take that, from a Brother of the Lodge of Benevolence!'"

"Pray—pray—not so loud."

"Nonsense!—let me finish my picture. Down goes the Frenchman of course—a victim to Universal Philanthropy. But he is not quite dead—he breathes—he moves—he groans, kicks, and writhes in agony, making a hundred natural signs of distress, if not the masonic one—when fortunately he is perceived by one of an order devoted to works of mercy—a Sister of Charity—who hastens to his relief—but no—by Jove! she finishes him!"

"What! kills him!"

"Yes—and why not? Where a Brother of Benevolence thrusts his sword, a Sister of Charity may surely poke her scissors."

CHAPTER III.

But the Secret!

"The Secret—the Secret!" cry a thousand daughters of Eve, not degenerated from their great first parent in the article of curiosity.

"The Secret!" about five hundred Paul Prys, quite as inquisitive as if they wore petticoats, and went mystery-hunting in bonnets and pattens.

"The Secret—the Secret—the Secret!" scream ten thousand of both sexes, who as boys and girls in their provincial

towns have trotted till dog-tired after the masonic processions—not more delighted with the music, the banners, the scarves, and aprons, and the glittering emblems of the craft, than astounded by the stupendous dignity of Mr. Gubbins, and the supernatural solemnity of young Griggs. Well do I remember wearing out a pair of my own little shoes with tagging after the Stoke Pogis Lodge of Ancient Druids, every man of them looking at the least a conjuror, and the Grand Master like a very King Solomon! No wonder Widow Drury called on him the very next morning to beg him to unbewitch her red cow—and to find out, by his Bible and compasses, who had stolen her black pig! "Ize warrant," said she, "he knows more secrets than one!"

"Yes, yes, the Secret—the Secret!" bellows out the whole herd of the curious—"that's what we want!"

No doubt. And so did Mrs. Stringer when she drove her husband, by her curiosity, into the other world. In vain the poor man pleaded his oath to his lodge, that he dared not divulge the mysterious formula under the most awful penalties, that he might drop stone dead at her feet, or at the least be struck deaf and dumb; that he should be burked, kidnapped, poisoned. In vain he told her a hundred stories, true or invented, of blabbing Masons who had been stabbed, shot, drowned, or whisked away from the face of the earth, as if by evil spirits. The perverse inquisitiveness of the woman pertinaciously insisted on the revelation; sometimes by coaxing, sometimes by threats, and, above all, by interminable curtain lectures on mutual confidence in the married state. She even helped him to get into his cups, in the hope that he might babble out the mystery in his tipsy loquacity. Worst of all, she set all her she-gossips on him, all giving tongue to the same text—the abominableness of reserve towards the wife of his

bosom. In short, the poor fellow became weary of his life; so weary, indeed, that one morning he was discovered hanging from a beam in the garret, with the following bitter billet pinned to his bosom.

"Mrs. S.—I am gone to learn the GREAT SECRET!
You shall know it when I come back,
"S. S."

"Ah! the Secret! the Secret!" That unlucky word has revived all the old hubbub; the female voices screaming high above the rest of the chorus. I verily believe that when Pandora pried into the fatal Box she thought it contained the mystic paraphernalia of the craft; that when Fatima determined to inspect the forbidden Chamber, she fancied that it was a Masonic Lodge. Nay, I verily believe the fair creatures long to have a lodge or two of their own!

"And why not, sir?" exclaims a little brisk body, bustling up like an offended bantam, "Why not, sir? Why shouldn't there be she Masons as well as he ones, and particularly considering what masonry sets up for, namely, wisdom, strength, and beauty, in which last our sex has always been allowed to stand first? Sure am I we should look quite as well as the men do, in jewels, and sashes, and aprons, let alone personal charms. As to which I may say, without vanity, whether for face or figure, I'm quite as fit for a public procession as that regular Guy, old Griffis, with his red nose, and pot-belly, and spindle-shanks. Then as to wisdom; to be sure that nincum, Mr. Boggles, is a fine model of it;—who knows his own mind one minute, and don't know it the next, any more than if it was a shabby acquaintance."

"And as regards strength, ma'am."

"Well, as regards strength, sir. There's some women

could knock down some men with a poker. There's myself—supposing it was proper for females to be pugilistical—I shouldn't mind fisticuffing little Snitch the Taylor, and he's a Mason, in a roped ring. I did have a scuffle once with a man when I was the Bear, and I've had two or three since I've been the Dragon."

"A Masonic sign, I presume, ma'am."

"No—a ninn. Talking of signs, I've talked on my fingers by the hour together, to the deaf and dumb boy at our next door. So, if that's masonry, I'm fit for it already. But any one can make signs. Even the little blaggard boys that take sights, as they call it, just as if they was blowing a flageolet with their noses, and playing on it with their fingers, only they've no flageolet."

"Little 'Sons of Harmony,' perhaps."

"No, sir; little sons of the parish. As to signs and signals, I'd back old Jack Duff, at the telegrafts, agin the best Mason as stands in shoe leather. And what's more to the pint, when old Jack's laid up, his wife telegrafts for him—and as well as he can—let alone she once put up the high-water flag instead of the low one, and by which the Lovely Nancy struck the bar, and got knocked to pieces. The more fool she for striking first!"

"Very true, ma'am."

"Howsomever, as I said afore, why shouldn't women be Masons as well as the male sex, who, for all their fuss about Brotherhood and Benevolence, are not a bit fonder of mankind than we are?"

"That, ma'am, is undeniable."

"To be sure we mayn't be quite such dabs at chiselling and levelling as the regular Operatives: but we could get through it allegollically as well as the best of them: for they do say, that except laying a first stone now and then, it's only

playing at Bilding and Arketecter, after all, and their trowels have as little to do with mortering as my own fish-slice."

"Certainly, ma'am. But some of the Masonic orders are Military ones—the Knight Templars, for instance."

"Ah! them's another thing. And to go fighting and skrimmaging abroad with Turks and Tartars is, to be sure, rather out of Woman's provinces. Not to name the encampments, and which is hardly fit for females, except the gipsy ones that are accustomed to living in tents."

"Of course, ma'am. I will ask only one more question, and pray excuse it; but the fair are popularly supposed to be rather accessible to curiosity. Do you really think, then, that a lady could preserve the Masonic Secret?"

"The Secret! the Secret!" the old chorus strikes up, only with twice as strong a company as before: for all the young ladies' schools in London have chimed in: and there is no such Secret-monger in the world as your Miss in her teens. They must be pacified somehow.

"My dear ladies——"

"The Secret! the Secret!"

"My dear gentlemen——"

"The Secret!"

"My dear ladies and gentlemen, only one word. How do you know there is any Secret at all?"

CHAPTER IV.

Now I think of it, there was once a female who contrived to be present at a Masonic Meeting.

"To be sure there was!" exclaims the little bustling body of the Dragon, "for it was me, myself!"

"You, ma'am?"

"Yes, me, sir. And the way were this. There was an execution put in at the White Horse, which, in consequence, couldn't be convivial; and as Masons likes to lay a good foundation, the warden applies to the Dragon, for hospitality, and engages my great club-room. There was to be grand doings, and especially initiating of new members; and thinks I, if I don't initiate myself at the same time, I'm no woman. So I takes out the shelves in the club-room closet, which, by good luck, would just hold my low easy cheer, in which I could sit comfortable, with my eye flush with the keyhole. First taking a glass of cordial to steady my nerves, having such a Mellow Drammer, as I may say, agoin to be acted afore me. For they do say there's awful ceremonies at the binding of fresh Apprentices, and what with brandishing red hot pokers, and flashing naked swords overhead, a Mason, after being 'nitiated, needn't fear nothin' for the rest of his life. Well, there I am all snug, but uncommon tedious, for the Grand Lodge of Fidelity was anything but true to their time. However, at long and at last in they come, Grand Masters, Deputy Grands, Past-Masters, Wardens, Tylers, and all the rest of them. Old Griffis, with his red nose and spindle-shanks at their head! I don't mind saying I felt a sort of misgiving come over me, and a wish to be settin' anywhere else, partickly with the cramp in both legs, and not daring to call out; for in course I should have been murdered on the spot for prying into their mysteries. But it were too late to alter, so there I was with my two poor calves tying themselves up in double knots; besides, almost bustin' with supprest hiccups. Not that I should have minded my sufferings a pin, provided I could have indulged my curiosity; but what with pain and fright, and nervous noises in my ears, I was as deaf as a post."

"Why, then, you heard nothing at all?"

"Not a syllable. Only a sort of mumbling, and a whiz, whiz, whizzing like a mill full of spinning jennies in my own head."

"But you could see, ma'am!"

"Yes, a bit of the back of a brown coat, for Brother Somebody had plumped himself afore the key-hole—and that's all as I know of the Freemason's Secret!"

CHAPTER V.

"THE Secret! The Secret! The Secret!"

The uproar is greater than ever! That last disappointment, from the closet of the Dragon, has turned Curiosity and her vast brood into mere savages, fierce as Furies, ravenous as famished wolves, and so fearless, that were there a Tiger in the bag instead of a Cat, they would ask for it to be let out!

If I could only sell the thing in shares I should make my fortune. Already an official gentleman, who for obvious reasons must remain nameless, has bribed me, in a whisper, with the offer of a round sum of the public "Service Money," called Secret.

"The Secret! The Secret! The Se—se—secret!"

Oh, those dreadful gossips! those terrible School Girls. Hark to Prospect House! "Do tell us, do, do, do, do, do, there's a love, there's a duck, there's a darling, there's a dear creature; only the first syllable, only the first letter. Make a riddle of it, and let us guess it!"

What a strange yet fearful sight! A hundred thousand at the least of men and women, boys and girls, all agape, as if they were listening with their mouths; and five thousand

deaf people, with their tubes, cornets, and trumpets, fighting, pushing, and elbowing like mad things to get in front.

And all this striving to hear a word, a single word, not so long by an inch as "Honorificabilitudinitatibus," a word, possibly, of only two syllables, perhaps only of one, and, may be, not even that!

CHAPTER VI.

"AND do you mean to say, sir,"—bellows a burly, pompous personage, with the very tone and manner of an oracle in his own circle—one of those human omnibuses that are invariably "All right" by their own proclamation, whether full or empty, fast or slow, going up the road, or breaking down in it—"do you really mean to say that the Freemasons have no Secret, sir—no private signs, sir—no symbolical rites, sir—no symbolical ceremonies, sir—of the highest significance?"

"By no means. On the contrary, I propose, according to my promise in the first chapter, to tell all I know on the subject; and to that end am about to detail what I personally witnessed last Christmas."

"Very good, sir,"—replies the Great Infallible, with that complacent air with which he bestows such patronage on a modest opinion when it coincides with his own—"Very good, sir—go on, sir."

"I shall premise, then, that the performance in question took place at a House about six miles from London."

"Ah—a Provincial Lodge—Well, sir—and the ceremony was a mystery to you, of course?"

"Quite. A perfect riddle."

"No doubt—as it must be, sir, to the uninitiated."

"O! completely. However, as I said before, the meeting took place in the country—in a large room, handsomely decorated, and profusely lighted up——"

"Stop, sir! Did you observe any Candlesticks?"

"Yes—several very massive ones, and apparently of silver."

"I thought so—very good. And some of the company wore purple scarves, and some had blue ones—and some were decorated with jewels?"

"Certainly—and feathers."

"No doubt, sir—and now for the ceremonies. What came first, sir?"

"A tall gentleman—in a cap and feathers, and a mantle; followed by several companions."

"Companions?—well, sir—what next?"

"The tall gentleman knelt down, very humbly, before another gentleman,—I should say, from his accent and physiognomy, a North Briton."

"Not a doubt of it. They're reviving the Order of Chivalry in Edinborough. Pray how was he dressed, sir?"

"I hardly remember, except that he looked much like a gentleman going to a masquerade."

"Any sword, sir?"

"Yes, naked, in his right hand. He flourished it a great deal about the head of the kneeling gentleman, till I thought he was going to kill him, but, instead of decapitating him, he only gave him a smart blow with the flat of the blade on the shoulder."

"Precisely. I knew it."

"After that the tall gentleman got up, and one of his companions fixed a pair of riding spurs on his heels."

"I said so;—a Knight Templar."

"The tall gentleman in the cap and feathers and mantle

then retired with his companions, escorting the gentleman with the drawn sword, with as great ceremony as if he had been a Prince of Blood Royal."

"And so some of them were in old times. Go on, sir."

"After a few minutes the Scotch gentleman came in again, but in a different costume—a robe more like a figured dressing-gown, with a fur cape over his shoulders, and a gold chain over the cape. The tall man walked before him with a long sword, but sheathed; and a shorter man walked behind, with something like a mace. There was a great deal of bowing and ceremony, and then the Scotch gentleman in the robes seated himself, like a judge, in a large elbow chair. I suppose at least that he represented some kind of judge, for several persons were brought before him on some charge which, being rather deaf, I could not hear."

"For a breach of discipline, sir; something against the Rules of the Order."

"Perhaps so. However, by degrees, the whole party began to wrangle, and got to high words."

"What about, sir—what about?"

"Heaven knows! for they all talked together, and made such a noise, that at last, by order of the great man in the chair, whatever he was, the whole of the disputants were put under arrest and forced out of the presence."

"Yes! there has been some schism in the Chapters;—but surely they would not expose themselves so before a stranger? Then you don't know, sir, what the quarrel was about, sir?"

"Not in the least. I only heard the gentleman in the robe, and fur tippet, and gold collar——"

"The Grand Master, sir."

"Well, I only heard him invite the rest of the gentlemen to some Banquet or Festival."

"Where, sir—where?"

"I presume at the *Provisional* Priory. And then the chairman departed, with the same state and ceremony as at his entrance."

"And that was the end, sir?"

"By no means. After a little while the Scotch gentleman——"

"The Knight, sir—the Knight Templar!"

"Well, the Knight Templar, or whatever he was, returned; but with a white cap on his head, and in a long white garment, like a nightgown."

"A surplice, sir—a surplice. First, a Knight and then a Priest, to represent the Church Militant."

"I do not know, sir, whether he was a clergyman or not. At least he did not preach: though he knelt down and seemed to say his prayers, after which he snuffed all the candles in the room, and then lay down on the floor, with only a cushion under his head, and apparently went to sleep."

"Like a Crusader in Palestine.—Good! capital! very symbolical, indeed! Very!—Well, sir, the Knight went to sleep?"

"Or, at least, made believe; and snored louder than any gentleman I ever heard. But he had hardly slumbered five minutes, when the door suddenly burst open, and in rushed a dozen men, dressed up like savages, and with their faces blacked, as if to represent devils."

"Moors, sir, Moors!—Excellent!—An irruption of the Saracens!"

"Why, they certainly looked more like Pagans than Christians; and more like wild Indians, or hobgoblins, than either. And then to see how they danced round the sleeping man; brandishing shovels, tongs, pokers, swords, guns, clubs, bows and arrows, and all sorts of strange weapons; whilst one of

the figures straddled across the poor gentleman on the floor, and finally sat down on his body, compressing his chest and stomach till he groaned again!"

"Beautiful! famous! And now, sir, having been present —lord knows how—at a Grand Conclave of the Knight Templars, will you presume, sir—to say, sir—that Free Masonry has no Secrets, sir—no significant rites, sir—no signs, sir—no symbols, no mystical word, sir?"

"Excuse me. All I mean to say is, that, in my decided opinion, the Ceremony just described was only—"

"What, sir; pray what?"

"An ACTED CHARADE, sir; and that the Grand Secret, the mystical word, expressed by symbols, was simply *Knight-May'r!*"

ANECDOTE OF HER PRESENT MAJESTY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "REAL RANDOM RECORDS."

KING George the Fourth, the uncle of the reigning sovereign, Queen Victoria, is very well known to have held strong opinions on the subject of Catholic Emancipation. I forget on which side, but he could not bear O'Connell; and when Kemble the Poet wrote a Poem called "O'Connell's Child," his Majesty would not read it. Franklin was another of his aversions; I mean the man who drew down lightning with a kite, and went to the North Pole. But his favourite antipathy, or rather his royal Father's, was Wilkie, the North Briton. He was supposed, if I remember rightly, to have a hand with Canning in the famous work called the "Anti-Something" against the French republican principles, which

Burke attacked about the same time in Parliament in his celebrated speech, when he threw down the dagger, and said to Fox, "There's a knife and fork." Canning, who afterwards became Prime Minister, was stolen in his youth by a gipsy, one Elizabeth Squires, who was tried for it, and either acquitted or hung. It made a great noise at the time: which reminds me of Mother Brownrigg, who starved her apprentices so cruelly that one of them, named Otway, choked himself in ravenously swallowing a penny roll. I think there was something written on it, called the "Rolliad," but am not sure. Swift was certainly writing on or about the time; and his notorious "Draper's Letters," in favour of shutting up early, were very popular with the shopmen of the metropolis. So were "Sinbad's Voyages to Lilliput." I forget what great people were shown up in it. But the rage was for the "Beggar's Opera," the author of which was said to have made Rich, rich; and Gay, gay. Something runs in my head that he also wrote the "Elegy in a Country Churchyard." Perhaps it was Gray—or did Gray write the "Beggar's Opera?" One gets puzzled between such similar names. For example, one of my own favourite works is White's or Wright's "History of Shelburne or Selburne," I never can remember which. However, as I said before, King William the Fourth had his political prejudices, and who has not? Every bias, as some one says, has its bowl; probably Lord Shaftesbury in his Maxims, if it was Shaftesbury, and if they were maxims. My head is not what it was, nor will be on this side the grave—but so long as my memory serves me to recal an anecdote or two, however imperfectly, I must not complain.

E. T.

THE ECHO.

THE writer of the following Letter guesses so truly at the main cause of the delay in the publication of the present Number, that our best explanation to our Subscribers will be, to give the epistle entire, *verbatim et literatim*,—as addressed to the Editor:

"SIR,

"By your not cumming out on the Furst, I conclude you are lade up—being notorus for enjoyin bad helth. Pullmery, of course. Like my poor Robert—for I've had a littery branch in my own fammily—a periodical one like yourself, only every Sunday, insted of once a munth; and as such, well knew what it was to write long-winded articles with Weekly lungs. Poor fellow! As I often said, so much head work, and nothin but Head work, will make a Cherubbim of you: and so it did.—Nothing but write—write—write, and read—read—read; and, as our Doctor says, it's as bad to studdy till all is brown, as to drink till all is blew. Mix your cullers. And wery good advice it is—when it can be follerd, witch is not always the case: for if necessity has no Law, it has a good deal of Litterature, and Authers must rite what they must.

"As poor Robert used to say about seddontary habits, it's very well, says he, to tell me about—like Mr. Wordsworth's single man as grew dubble—sticking to my chair; but if there's no sitting, says he, ther'll be no hatching; and if I do brood too much at my desk it's because there's a brood expected from me once a week. Oh, its very well, says he, to cry Up, up with you; and go and fetch a walk, and take

a look at the daisies, when you've sold your mind to Miffy Stofilis; and there's a Divil waiting for your last proofs, as he did for Doctor Forster's. I know it's killin me, says he; but if I die of overwork it's in the way of my vacation. Poor boy! I did all I could to nurridge him: Mock Turkey soop and strong slops, and Wormy Jelly and Island Moss; but he couldn't eat. And no wunder; for mental labor, as the Doctor said, wares out the stummack as well as the Branes, and so he'd been spinning out his inside like a spider. And a spider he did look at last, sure enuff—one of that sort, with long spindle legs, and only a dot of a Boddy in the middle.

"Another bad thing is settin up all nite as my Sun did, but it's all agin Natur. Not but what sum must, and partickly the writers of Polliticks for the Papers; but they ruin the Constitushun. And, besides, even Poetry is apt to get prosy after twelve or one; and some late authors read very sleepy. But as poor Robert said, what is one to do when no day is long enuff for one's work, nor no munth either? And to be sure, April, June, November, and September, are all short munths, but Febber-*very!* However, one grate thing is, relaxing—if you can. As the Doctor used to say, what made Jack a dull boy—why being always in the workhouse and never at the playhouse. So get out of your gownd and slippers, says he, and put on your Best Things and unbend yourself like a Beau. If you've been at your poeticle flights, go and look at the Tems Tunnel; and if you're tired of being Witty, go and spend a hour with the Wax Wurk. The mind requires a Change as well as the merchants.

"So take my advice, Sir—a mother's advice—and relax a littel. I know what it is: You want brassing, a change of Hair, and more stummuck. And you ought to ware flannin, and take tonicks. Do you ever drink Basses Pail? It's as

good as cammomile Tea. But above all, there's one thing I'd recummend to you: Steal Wine. It's been a savin to sum invallids.

"Hoping you will excuse this libberty from a Stranger but a well-meening one,

"I am, Sir,

'A SUBSCRIBER."

THE WORKHOUSE CLOCK.

AN ALLEGORY.

THERE'S a murmur in the air,
And noise in every street—
The murmur of many tongues,
The noise of numerous feet—
While round the Workhouse door
The Labouring Classes flock,
For why? the Overseer of the Poor
Is setting the Workhouse Clock.

Who does not hear the tramp
Of thousands speeding along
Of either sex and various stamp,
Sickly, crippled, or strong,
Walking, limping, creeping
From court, and alley, and lane,
But all in one direction sweeping
Like rivers that seek the main?

Who does not see them sally
From mill, and garret, and room,

In lane, and court and alley,
From homes in poverty's lowest valley,
Furnished with shuttle and loom—
Poor slaves of Civilization's galley—
And in the road and footways rally,
As if for the Day of Doom!
Some, of hardly human form,
Stunted, crooked, and crippled by toil;
Dingy with smoke and dust and oil,
And smirch'd besides with vicious soil,
Clustering, mustering, all in a swarm.
Father, mother, and careful child,
Looking as if it had never smiled—
The Sempstress, lean, and weary, and wan,
With only the ghosts of garments on—
The Weaver, her sallow neighbour,
The grim and sooty Artisan;
Every soul—child, woman, or man,
Who lives—or dies—by labour.

Stirr'd by an overwhelming zeal,
And social impulse, a terrible throng!
Leaving shuttle, and needle, and wheel,
Furnace, and grindstone, spindle, and reel,
Thread, and yarn, and iron, and steel—
Yea, rest and the yet untasted meal—
Gushing, rushing, crushing along,
A very torrent of Man!
Urged by the sighs of sorrow and wrong,
Grown at last to a hurricane strong,
Stop its course who can!
Stop who can its onward course
And irresistible moral force;

O! vain and idle dream!
For surely as men are all akin,
Whether of fair or sable skin,
According to Nature's scheme,
That Human Movement contains within
A Blood-Power stronger than Steam.

Onward, onward, with hasty feet,
They swarm—and westward still—
Masses born to drink and eat,
But starving amidst Whitechapel's meat,
And famishing down Cornhill!
Through the Poultry—but still unfed—
Christian Charity, hang your head!
Hungry—passing the Street of Bread;
Thirsty—the street of Milk;
Ragged—beside the Ludgate Mart,
So gorgeous, through Mechanic-Art,
With cotton, and wool, and silk!

At last, before that door
That bears so many a knock
Ere ever it opens to Sick or Poor,
Like sheep they huddle and flock—
And would that all the Good and Wise
Could see the Million of hollow eyes,
With a gleam deriv'd from Hope and the skies,
Upturn'd to the Workhouse Clock!

Oh! that the Parish Powers,
Who regulate Labour's hours,
The daily amount of human trial,
Weariness, pain, and self-denial
Would turn from the artificial dial

That striketh ten or eleven,
And go, for once, by that older one
That stands in the light of Nature's sun,
And takes its time from Heaven!

REVIEW.

A New Spirit of the Age.

It was our intention to have reviewed this work seriously, in the present number of the Magazine; but an unlucky curiosity prompting us to turn, first, to the chapter at page 57, volume 2, we stumbled on so bewildering a passage, that we have done nothing but grope about in it ever since—even as the old woman who had her identity "cut all round about," and tried, in vain, to recognise herself by the help of her little dog.

"Mr. Hood was a wit about town, and a philosopher while recovering from 'the effects of last night.' His writings tended to give an unfavourable view of human nature, to make one suspicious and scornful. On the whole, though you had been amused and interested as you went on, you were left uncomfortable, and wished you could forget what you had read."

A wit about town! What town? Certainly not London. Not, it may be taken for Granted, the Great Metropolis. The country knows better. We are hardly reckoned a wit, even at Whitsuntide, about Ponder's End—a mere village. About town, as unknown for *jeux d'esprit* as the Townley marbles. Had the phrase referred, indeed, to Horace or James Smith, it might have had some consonance; or likelier still, if it had been applied to our all-but namesake, the author of "Sayings and Doings," who was notoriously a wit

about town, and especially about midnight. Hook, as Mr. R. H. Horne truly says, possessed both wit and humour. It was he who, when C., the publisher, wished to re-christen his unprofitable "Factory Boy," replied, "O, nothing more easy —call him the Unsatisfactory Boy!"—a repartee far beyond the wickedness of our wit, if it had been had up at Marlborough Street on purpose.

Such a convivialist, famous for lighting up certain of the club-houses with laughing gas, had occasionally, no doubt, to philosophise at a serious breakfast, after a gay supper. As much has been hinted by his biographers. But who ever heard of our recovering from "the effects of over night." Why, last night we drank nothing but gruel—not elevated by rum, and sugar, and spice, into a caudle,—but plain temperance gruel—a cup of Scotch porridge drowned in a bason of water. Who could recover from that? The early Edinburgh Reviewers, indeed, professed, according to Sidney Smith, to "philosophise on a little oatmeal," but experience soon showed that it was impossible to be Transcendental on Horse-Parliament cakes.

A worse count in the indictment now demands a plea—that "our writing tends to give an unfavourable view of human nature; to make one suspicious and scornful." Not Guilty! It is no fault of ours if some noses have a pugnacious turn-up with all mankind; if some faces, with what ought to be a pair of right and left eyes, cast only a sinister glance at the human race. It was never our peculiar pleasure to represent our fellow-creatures as no better than they should be—on the contrary, like the good mother when somebody described her children as little angels, we "wish they was." If, therefore, those who have been amused and interested by our poor lucubrations, have been left uncomfortable on the whole, and wished to forget what they had

read, it must have been from some other cause than our misanthropy—the presence, perhaps, as objected to in the majority of our "Whims and Oddities," of some "painful physicality;" for example, an old man with his night-cap a-light; an unpleasant incident enough, as a bare fact, but at least serio-comic when he goes sniffing down stairs to ask John and Mary if they do not smell fire. But it is as impossible to please all tastes as to suit some notions of coziness. Even in the first number of this Magazine, there were readers of the "Haunted House," to whom a ghost or goblin of any kind would have been a real comfort. A desirable spectre is certainly "A New Spirit of the Age," and ought to figure conspicuously in Mr. George Robins's next advertisement of an old Family Mansion.

And now to come to a palpable personality, who will believe that we, a wit about town, and a philosopher on sermons and soda-water, resemble "a gentleman of a serious turn of mind, who is out of health"—or, in plain English, a consumptive Methodist parson? Grave we certainly are, and an invalid; but who can credit that with "this unpromising outside and melancholic atmosphere," we are the wit of the Athenæum—the wag of the Carlton—the practical joker of the Garrick—the life of the Green Room? Who will swallow—? but stop. An ingenious friend suggests that we are, possibly, the victim of a mistake of the press—the substitution of a D for a K—that we have had our name, as Byron says, blundered in the Gazette.

> "Thrice happy he whose name has been well spelt
> In the dispatch: I know a man whose loss
> Was printed Grove, although his name was Gross."

An explanation the more plausible, seeing that Mr. Horne has hung us elsewhere with compliments much too flattering

to quote. So for the present we gratefully make our best bow to him, only requesting that in his second, or at any rate his third edition of "A New Spirit of the Age," he will have the kindness to insert the following erratum :—

"Vol. ii., page 57, 6th line from the top, for 'Hood,' read 'Hook.'"

THE BRIDGE OF SIGHS.

"Drown'd ! drown'd !"—*Hamlet.*

—♦—

One more Unfortunate,
Weary of breath,
Rashly importunate,
Gone to her death !

Take her up tenderly,
Lift her with care ;
Fashion'd so slenderly,
Young, and so fair !

Look at her garments
Clinging like cerements ;
Whilst the wave constantly
Drips from her clothing ;
Take her up instantly,
Loving, not loathing.—

Touch her not scornfully ;
Think of her mournfully,
Gently and humanly ;

Not of the stains of her,
All that remains of her
Now is pure womanly.

Make no deep scrutiny
Into her mutiny
Rash and undutiful:
Past all dishonour,
Death has left on her
Only the beautiful.

Still, for all slips of hers,
One of Eve's family—
Wipe those poor lips of hers
Oozing so clammily.

Loop up her tresses
Escaped from the comb,
Her fair auburn tresses;
Whilst wonderment guesses
Where was her home?

Who was her father?
Who was her mother?
Had she a sister?
Had she a brother?
Or was there a dearer one
Still, and a nearer one
Yet, than all other?

Alas! for the rarity
Of Christian charity
Under the sun!

Oh! it was pitiful!
Near a whole city full,
Home she had none.

Sisterly, brotherly,
Fatherly, motherly
Feelings had changed:
Love, by harsh evidence,
Thrown from its eminence;
Even God's providence
Seeming estranged.

Where the lamps quiver
So far in the river,
With many a light
From window and casement,
From garret to basement,
She stood, with amazement,
Houseless by night.

The bleak wind of March
Made her tremble and shiver;
But not the dark arch,
Or the black flowing river:
Mad from life's history,
Glad to death's mystery,
Swift to be hurl'd—
Any where, any where
Out of the world!

In she plunged boldly,
No matter how coldly

The rough river ran,—
Over the brink of it,
Picture it—think of it,
Dissolute Man!
Lave in it, drink of it,
Then, if you can!

Take her up tenderly,
Lift her with care;
Fashion'd so slenderly,
Young, and so fair!

Ere her limbs frigidly
Stiffen too rigidly,
Decently,—kindly,—
Smoothe, and compose them;
And her eyes, close them,
Staring so blindly!

Dreadfully staring
Thro' muddy impurity,
As when with the daring
Last look of despairing
Fix'd on futurity.

Perishing gloomily,
Spurr'd by contumely,
Cold inhumanity,
Burning insanity,
Into her rest.—
Cross her hands humbly,
As if praying dumbly,
Over her breast!

Owning her weakness,
Her evil behaviour,
And leaving, with meekness,
Her sins to her Saviour!

[Among the MSS. connected with the Bridge of Sighs I find the following fragmentary verses.]

BRIDGE OF SIGHS.

PART II.

Weary with troubles
That Death must deliver
Once more life bubbles
Away in the river—

* * * *

The moon in the river shone
And the stars some six or seven—
Poor child of sin, to throw it therein
Seemed sending it to Heaven.

* * * *

Cover her, cover her,
Throw the earth over her—
Victim of murder inhumanly done;
With gravel and sod—
Hide—hide her from God,
And the light of the sun!

THE MONSTER TELESCOPE.

[We feel infinite pride and gratification in being able to present the following letter *exclusively* to our Subscribers who will thus be in possession of discoveries, which for some days, probably some weeks, will not appear in the scientific journals. The astronomical reader will readily recognise the stupendous instrument referred to by our Correspondent, as the one constructed at the expense and under the direction of a nobleman of distinguished mechanical genius, and devoted to the sublime study of the stars. Its dimensions may be estimated from the fact that it is twice as long (eighty feet) as the famous telescope erected by Sir William Herschel at Slough. The diameter of the speculum is two yards!—Editor.]

Dublin, 21st April, 1844.

My dear * * * *

Since my last, an event has occurred here of unusual interest to the scientific world, and the astronomers in particular:—nothing less than the testing of the monster telescope!—with results so extraordinary and of such thrilling interest, that, jaded as I am with fatigue and excitement, I cannot resist sitting down to give some account of our discoveries.

It was my good fortune, you will remember, to be present at the casting of the great speculum, when his lordship so signally exhibited his skill, energy, and presence of mind: and on Friday last I was agreeably surprised by receiving a courteous invitation to assist, as the French say, at an experimental trial of the powers of the stupendous machine, at

last happily completed after the expenditure of so much time, labour, and money. Finding that my friend Maclure, the well-known author of a Treatise on the Differential Calculus, had received a similar card, we hired a chaise and proceeded together to the appointed rendezvous, his lordship's country seat. To prevent interruption, or intrusion, the affair was a profound secret, except to the initiated—in all about a score of persons, several of whom had come over expressly from England, and one or two from the Continent. According to Maclure, there was even a Professor from the Swedish University of Upsala.

The company being all mustered, we repaired in a body, led by our noble host, to the grounds, where we found the telescope erected *pro tempore* on a gentle eminence in the park; the abundant brass work glittering brightly in the moonbeams, and the huge frame throwing a complicated skeleton-like shadow across the smooth grass. Seen against the dark blue sky by the dubious lunar light, its dimensions seemed even greater than they really were. Altogether it looked more like some gigantic engine of war—a "hollow tube" of that artillery described by Milton as pointed by the rebellious angels against the host of Heaven, than a machine intended to aid in the peaceful achievements of science,—a quiet victory over space.

Some minutes were spent in walking round the telescope, watching its singular appearance in different aspects, and then in testing and admiring the simplicity of its construction and the facility of the movements. The workmanship was perfect. Not a screw was loose; not a hinge was stiff; every joint and pivot moved as easily and silently as those of the human frame. So delicate was the adjustment, so nice the poise, a child could have turned the enormous tube, at will, in any direction. No vibration, no oscillation. None

but the operatives of our country and our own times could have produced such a result. It was verily the triumph of modern Mechanic Art!

At last we all congregated in a group round the inferior end of the machine. The huge brass cap over the larger disc had been removed; the covering of the smaller lens was now withdrawn, and the tube stood ready to disclose its wondrous visions to the human eye. Expectation was on tip-toe—curiosity wound up to the highest pitch—anxiety on the rack—but nobody stirred or spoke. There was a dead, solemn pause of wonder, and I might say awe, for who knew what sublime revelations might be in store for us!—sights invisible to the mortal organ since the creation of the world! What perplexing problems were perhaps about to be solved! What long-cherished theories confirmed or overturned for ever!

In the meantime the glass was carefully levelled at one "bright particular star," and through the intense silence came an emphatic whisper distinctly audible to us all.

"Now then, gentlemen, for the first look through the virgin instrument." This honour was assigned to a personage who stood beside me:—the Astronomer Royal, probably, or Sir John Herschel; but my old infirmity prevented me from catching the name, and I am acquainted, personally, with very few of our *sçavans*. Possibly you will recognise him from my description—a large square-built man, very bald, with a bland countenance, and a peculiar hitch in his speech. He trembled visibly as he applied his eye to the glass, and to judge by myself we all quivered more or less with the same nervous excitement. By a stop-watch, his gaze would perhaps have occupied some forty or fifty seconds; but to my feeling, and doubtless to that of the rest of the company, the long, long look endured for several minutes. Nevertheless, nobody hurried to take his place when he

turned away from the glass. Every eye was intently riveted on his face as if to guess by its expression the nature and amount of his emotions. But to all our glances and inquiries he only answered by the exclamation—"Look! look!" with a gesture of his arm towards the telescope.

The noble proprietor was now urged to take the turn, and after a very hasty peep resigned his place to a foreigner, whom I should have guessed to be Mons. Arago, who certainly ought to have been there, if he had borne the least resemblance to the portraits of that distinguished philosopher. But he wanted the commanding figure, as well as the marked features, of the French astronomer. However, he wore the star of some foreign order on his bosom; and another of his attributes was a prodigious gold snuff-box, from which he drew and inhaled an intolerably long-drawn pinch before he settled to the glass. Like his Lordship, his politeness did not allow him to engross the sight for more than a few seconds; but they sufficed to convince him that the spectacle was "superbe! magnifique!" as he continued to ejaculate between each *prise* from his *tabatière*.

We now stood rather less ceremoniously on the order of our peeping. One after another hurried eagerly to the glass, curiosity sometimes taking precedence of good breeding; but the expressive faces of those of us who had looked, their excited gestures and vehement expressions of surprise and admiration, had worked impatience into a fever. These raptures, however, owed a portion of their intensity to some gratification vouchsafed only to the scientific; for, when my own turn came, my first feeling was one of disappointment. The two brilliant stars that I beheld, magnified almost into moons, were indeed beautiful objects—their discs sharply defined, and without any prismatic halo, or diffused light from scratches on the speculum,—defects which had been appre-

hended as likely to occur with lenses and a mirror of such enormous size. But that was all. I was not aware till afterwards of the true value of the phenomenon—that up to the hour, those twin orbs had been supposed to be one!

The company having warmly congratulated the noble proprietor on the signal success of his enterprise, the Gigantic Telescope was turned towards another quarter of the heavens, by this time studded with stars. The Frenchman now took the lead; and whatever he saw, the spectacle was too much for his equanimity. He hastily seized on his nearest neighbour, whom, with a "Mon Dieu!" he literally dragged to the glass—still exhorting every one about him to *regarder*, as if they could all have looked simultaneously through the tube. His successor was also a foreigner, possibly the Swedish Professor, for he had the same cast of face, with the long light hair flowing over his shoulders, as our old friend Jorgenson of Stockholm. He was also strongly excited, as was a very venerable white-haired gentleman, who followed him in turn; the last indeed, by the glistening of his eyes, was even in tears. And really there was cause for such strong emotion, considering the singular beauty of the spectacle, and the interesting nature of the discovery which I shall endeavour to describe.

In common with many others, I have often wondered at the little resemblance between the constellations and the objects after which they are named. With trifling exceptions, they suggest no figures at all, certainly not the monsters, real or fabulous, that sprawl on our celestial maps. For example, it would require a very courtier's imagination to detect in the stars of Taurus any similarity to a bull, or in Cetus, anything "very like a whale." As to the Bear, he much more resembles his vulgar alias the Plough. But we did injustice to the Chaldean seers, and the patriarchal

shepherds, or whoever recognised the ancient signs in heaven, and bestowed on them their names. In the course of ages, many of the stars belonging to the Constellations have receded, and disappeared, like the remarkable one missed from its place by Hipparchus of Rhodes, about 160 years before the Christian era. These lost stars, till now invisible to modern eyes, were however plainly discernible through the Monster Telescope; and it was obvious, that when they occupied their original places, the Constellations to which they belonged must have presented a striking, not to say startling, resemblance to the figures with which they were associated. For instance, Leo, which was as well defined in outline by its stars, as our Royal Crowns, &c., in illumination lamps!

The excitement produced by this brilliant discovery it would be difficult to describe. One little brisk personage actually capered with delight; whilst the Frenchman threw himself, after the national fashion, on his Lordship, whom he overwhelmed with his embraces and his voluble felicitations. Another, a tall, large man, walked rapidly to and fro, rubbing his hands vehemently, and muttering to himself, "It beats the solar eclipse at Pisa!" * In the meantime some of the more composed of the party took occasional peeps through the telescope, and from their successive reports, beheld not only double, triple, and quadruple stars of various colours, blue, red, green, and purple, but absolute swarms of comets, not less than sixty-four being counted within the same field of view—some with a single tail, others with two, and one projecting from its nucleus three distinct trains of light, diverging from each other at angles of about twenty degrees!

Judge of our state of enthusiasm and rapture at these

* Probably Mr. Baily, the astronomer.—Ed.

thronging novelties! Everybody seemed more or less in a state of delirium! For my own part I can only compare my feeling to the exaltation which I once experienced after inhaling the laughing gas. I seemed literally lifted

> Above the earth,
> And possessed joys not promised at my birth.

Nothing but the dread of alarming the neighbourhood, and attracting a concourse of the peasantry, prevented our joining in a general shout.

As yet nobody had positively mentioned the Moon; but sundry glances at the planet had shown that she was not absent from our thoughts. These significant looks now became more frequent; and her name even began to be uttered amongst us, in spite of a previous understanding that she was to be left to the last, by way of a *bonne bouche*. But the wonders we had already seen had excited our appetite for the marvellous to a ravenous pitch; and of all the celestial bodies, the Moon, the nearest to the earth—our own satellite, with her maplike face—her dark and bright spots—her prodigious mountains, valleys, and active volcanoes, has ever been a subject of supreme interest in human speculation. These conjectural fancies the Monster Telescope, with its immense powers, now promised to set at rest, together with the romantic theory of Fontenelle, of a Plurality of Worlds, each inhabited like our own.

Inspired by these hopes, and eager to realise them, there sprung up amongst us a sort of agitation, carried on by murmurs and gestures, which finally led to the investigation of the Moon, in preference to Jupiter and his Satellites, Saturn and his Ring, the Nebulæ, or the Milky Way. The venerable gentleman already alluded to was the first to look; and after a while actually staggered away from the glass with

an ejaculation, which, though natural under the circumstances, would seem profane if deliberately committed to paper. However, it sufficed, with his look of concern, if not horror, to drive us from our propriety. There was a general rush towards the glass, each individual who succeeded, in turn, having to endure entreaties, remonstrances, and even reproaches, from the more impatient of the throng. In this unsatisfactory way I obtained a hurried glimpse; but it served to show me such a scene of desolation as I had never contemplated even in a dream. Wide dreary wastes of white sand, bounded by barren rocks, enclosing gloomy valleys, dark as that of the Shadow of Death! Vegetation there was none; but one immense shady tract proved to be a vast forest—literally a Black Forest—of charred trees! In its shape I seemed to recognise one of those dark patches, on the surface of the full moon,* which are visible to the naked eye. Dismal as these features were, there were others of quite as melancholy a character. Thus the bright spot named after Kepler by the astronomers, was made out by the Swedish Professor to be a great conical hill of bones bleached to a dazzling whiteness. To what class of animals they belonged it was impossible to determine; but none of them resembled the bones of the human species.

From these indications we at first entertained sanguine hopes of seeing some living creatures; but not the least sign or stir of life could be detected in any part of the planet. But the most astounding discovery was yet to come. Amongst the dark patches on the face of the moon, discernible by the naked eye, is a remarkable one, supposed to be a valley or cavity, which has been estimated by some astronomers as fifty miles broad, and nearly three miles in

* Perhaps the one called Cleomedes.—Ed.

depth. It is called after Tycho Brahe, I believe, by the learned. In the midst of this huge hollow there appears a bright spot, formerly the object of much speculation and controversy, but now ascertained, by the extraordinary powers of the new telescope, to be *the skeleton of a gigantic animal—of dimensions so enormous as to surpass the mammoth or mastodon as much as they exceed in size our ordinary oxen!*

The skeleton was lying on its side; and most of the bones retaining their places, afforded a very good notion of its figure. According to the Frenchman, who professed to have studied osteology under Cuvier, the structure was very peculiar, and unlike that of any known terrestrial animal, living or fossil. From the valley where it lay there ran a long narrow ravine, which you may trace by referring to a map of the moon. It was strewed with detached bones, and was doubtless the passage by which the monster issued and returned from his foragings.

The total absence of life, and the conical mound of bleached bones, were now accounted for; the Monster, after ravaging all around, had at last perished by famine; but there is something bewildering in the idea of a creature of such magnitude inhabiting a planet not so large by two-thirds as our own.

To give you any idea of the effect produced on us by so unexpected, and I may say so appalling, a spectacle, is impossible. It was absolutely stunning. We stood and looked silently in each other's faces like men suddenly awakened from a sound sleep. Could it be real? Was it not all a dream? And *that*, then, was the Moon, the favourite haunt of poetical and romantic love fancies—one of the retreats of the fairies! Well might the Frenchman shrug his shoulders and exclaim that it was "*triste—vraiment affligeante!*" Nor did it much surprise me to see the old white-haired gentle-

man, sitting on the grass, weeping like a child. In reality there was something depressing and shocking in the horrible desolation we had witnessed; yet withal so strangely fascinating, that we returned to it again and again. But we made no new discovery; except of the crater of an extinct volcano, in the vicinity of the charred forest already described.

At this point the party broke up, and Maclure and myself took leave. But there are mysterious whisperings afloat of subsequent explorations by a "select few;" and in particular of some supposed ethereal or angelic beings discovered in Vesta. Their shape, it is said, cannot be distinguished; nor are they visible whilst within the disc of the planet, which is a very bright one; but when beyond its edge they are discernible, against the dark sky, hovering about with a soft greenish light, like that of the fire flies one sees on the banks of the Rhine. As soon as I can obtain any authentic particulars you shall hear from me again. In the meantime, adieu.

Yours ever,

CHARLES MAITLAND KILGOUR.

I omitted to mention that, observing how everybody rubbed their eyes after looking through the telescope, I determined to watch my own sensations, and detected a slight drawing or shooting pain in the organs, of course from the immense power of the lenses overstraining the optic nerve. I have just learned that several of the party are suffering from the same cause, one of them even with a temporary blindness of the right eye.

ANECDOTE

OF HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS PRINCE ALBERT.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "REAL RANDOM RECORDS."

THE Consort of our gracious Queen is, as everybody knows, a Prince of the house of Saxe Gotha. Whether the famous Marshal Saxe was a member of the same family I cannot trace; but the place is celebrated for its well-known Almacks. Not that it was the first work of the kind by any means. Poor Richard's Almanack preceded it by many years. So did Francis, or Frances, Moore's; and there was a Popular one called Partridge's. One of his descendants is a Professor of Astrology, or Astronomy, or Anatomy—at any rate of something beginning with A, at one of our Universities or Colleges. I am not sure that the name was not Woodcock; but it reminded me of some wild bird of the kind. That notorious sporting character, Colonel Thornville, of Thornton Royal, once shot sixty brace of them on the same day. Another celebrated sporting character was Sir John Lade, or Ladd. I forget how much he betted to drive some sort of a vehicle, with two, or four, or six horses, a certain number of miles in a certain number of hours, and whether he won or lost; but it was reckoned a great feat. Then there was Merlin's carriage, without any horses at all. I am sure, at least, it went without horses; but am not positive if it was moved by springs or steam. Perhaps steam was not then invented. There are still carriages in the present day called Merlins, or Berlins—which is it?—but they are drawn by horses. The last invented vehicles, I believe, are called Broughams, or Brooms. But to return to

Prince Albert of Prussia, the son or brother—no, the cousin of the present king. There are some curious particulars about the Court of Prussia and Frederick the Great in the Memoirs of his aunt, the Margravine of Anspach and Bareuth. I remember reading them in the original French —who, by the way, excel in their biographies. The only thing we have to compare with them is the life, by himself, of Lord Herbert of Cherburg. A noted place in war time for harbouring the enemy's privateers. They did a great deal of damage to our export, and picked up some very rich prizes in the Channel. One of them, called the Jones Paul, or some such names, terribly infested the Scotch and English coasts, till, according to a memorandum now lying before me, she was driven ashore in Kent by Commodore G. P. R. James, and the pirates were taken prisoners at Sevendroog Tower on Shooter's Hill

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REVIEW.

ETCH'D THOUGHTS. By the ETCHING CLUB.—Longman & Co.

THE process called Etching, although patronised and practised by the highest personage in the kingdom, is little known or understood by the public in general, who commonly suppose the term to be synonymous with engraving. It may be briefly defined as drawing on copper with a steel point or needle, for the shape of which see a representation of the "sharp thing" in the title-page of the work itself. The design thus scratched through a waxen coat on the metal, is corroded or bit in with *aqua fortis;* the finest lines of all being afterwards scratched on the copper with the tool

without the use of the acid, or, as it is called, with the dry point. The roughness at the sides of the slight furrows thus made in the metal is called the burr, which, in printing, retains some of the ink that would otherwise be wiped off the surface of the plate, and produces that soft smeary tint so much admired by the initiated. An etching, properly, is never touched by the *graver*, a sharp cutting tool that makes deep lines in the copper, as the surgeons would say, by the first intention, without the help of the *aqua fortis*. And in etchings, painter's etchings at least, the effect is produced, more artistically, and less mechanically, than in engravings where the various tints are obtained by ruled lines of different degrees of closeness and thickness, according to the shade required.

The vulgar eye, accustomed to the sleekness of modern engravings, and especially those executed on steel, will be very apt to take fright at what would probably be called the scratchy appearance of an etching by a painter—just as some foreigners would object to a coat of English broadcloth, compared to those glossy ones to be seen abroad, shining as if fresh from a drenching shower of rain. Nevertheless, as fine or finer tints and tones of colour are produced by the hand, than by the ruler or machine—as in the plates called the Burial Place and the Village Church, both by Creswick, in the handsome work before us.

In one essential particular the etching point brings the power of the artist to the test, namely drawing, in which our native painters are generally supposed to be somewhat deficient. There is no striking the outline with the sharp decisive needle as may be done with a soft pencil, a crayon, or a brush-full of colour. All deformities or disproportions are glaringly apparent: a glance shows whether the designer can or cannot draw, however he may affect a careless execu-

tion and a disregard for details. Every touch is visibly good or bad, right or wrong; and judging from the book before us, we are rather disposed to concur in the opinion above alluded to as to the character of our countrymen as draughtsmen. In colouring they are unrivalled in modern times and masterly at effect, of which there are some favourable examples in the "Etch'd Thoughts," as well as of the besetting sin of painter-etchers in exaggerated light and dark, positive white opposed to blacker shadows than are at all consistent with nature, except during severe thunder-storms and awful conflagrations. As illustrating the reverse of this fault, and the mock-heroical clare obscure, let the reader refer to the gem called the Chase, by Frederick Townsend, breathing the very cool, dewy, breezy freshness of nature, shining with the tender, pearly light of the young morning! On the other hand there are exceptions where blackness is a merit and even aids the sentiment. Witness the beautiful plate by Cope, called the Wanderer's Return, with that yew of a sable hue overhanging the grave-stone like *a tree in mourning*. But surely again a little colour might have been spared from the face—looking as if it wanted shaving all over—of the English Peasant, so named, but mistaken by us, at first, for Mr. Wordsworth, in the character of his own Waggoner. There is fine truth of colour in the face of Knight's Gipsy Boy.

These last mentioned subjects induce us to remark, *en passant*, on the title of the work, "Etch'd Thoughts"—clearly, as regards nine-tenths of the illustrations, a misnomer, inasmuch as it implies a collection of what the old writers called conceits, only expressed graphically instead of verbally. A mere half length of a countryman in a smock frock, or a gipsy boy drawn literally, are no more thoughts than our bare description in words of the same objects. Neither are

Mr. Lewis's two trees, or rather stems of trees, flanking a brook, however naturally depicted—a thought. But Mr. Redgrave's Fairies are a thought—more substantial than such gossamer creatures ought to be. The Love's Enemies, of Mr. Cope, are however a thoughtful allegory; and so is the Devill's Webbe of Bell, who has also rung out his thoughts on the matter in a quaint sonnet.

THE DEVILL'S WEBBE.

Thys Webbe our Passions bee, and eke the Flies
Be wee poore Mortals; in the centre coyles
Old Nicke, a Spider grimme who doth devyse
Ever to catch us in his cunninge Toyles.
Look at his Claws, how long they are and hooked!
Look at his Eyes, and mark how grim and greedie!
Look at his horrid Fangs, how sharp and crooked!
Then keep Thy Distance so, I thus arrede ye.
Oh sillie Flie! an thou woulds't keep thee whole,
For, an he catch thee, he will eate thy Soule.

Severn's idea of a *Step-Lover* in the Neapolitan Vintage, is quite a new thought; but, generally, there is an absence of *that*, for want of which Cymon whistled on his way. By the way, we would give a trifle to know what that young Damsel and the Page, drawn by Frank Stone, are really thinking of, besides the Lesson. It is a very pleasing plate, and a sample of good sound etching, and no trickery, to boot.

On the whole, spite of a rather unequal collection of plates, good, bad, and indifferent, the "Etch'd Thoughts" have some very good points about them, and form a very handsome and desirable book, (the typography, from the Chiswick Press, is splendid), and fit to set before the Queen, to whom it is dedicated.

THE ECHO.

It is with unfeigned pleasure that, after a silence of a month, I renew my intercourse with my readers, through the "still small voice of print."

During the interval it has been my lot to undergo a fearful wrestling with Death; and although I have, for the present, escaped that fatal back fall which he has thrown so many of his mortal antagonists, enough remains in my shattered frame to remind me of the physical pangs and wrenches of so protracted a contest. Indeed, for the future, as at pre sent, the serious and incurable nature of my complaints will require my whole stock of that cheerful philosophy which it has been my aim to recommend, heretofore, by my pen and personal practice. And, after all (and be this my answer to the correspondent who signs himself "Verity"), it is better to have an enlarged heart than a contracted one; and even such a hæmorrhage as mine than a spitting of spite.

It will doubtless surprise some persons who have read the "Echo," in the last number, to find me so soon resuming the pen and the pencil. The truth is, such exercises are somewhat against the triple injunction of my medical advisers, who strenuously ordered me "to do nothing," which, on trial, was so hard to do, that a head and hand, unaccustomed to sheer idleness, flew to any work in preference. To the kind, but unknown friends, who have afforded me their sympathy—some, by letter—a few designs and a chapter will be welcome evidences of my recovery, or rather, amendment; for I have not even yet taken a final leave of my physicians, nor made, without reserve, the present, recommended by Macbeth, to the canine race.

THE LAY OF THE LABOURER.

It was a gloomy evening. The sun had set, angry and threatening, lighting up the horizon with lurid flame and flakes of blood-red—slowly quenched by slants of distant rain, dense and dark as segments of the old deluge. At last the whole sky was black, except the low driving grey scud, amidst which faint streaks of lightning wandered capriciously towards their appointed aim, like young fire-fiends playing on their errands.

"There will be a storm!" whispered Nature herself, as the crisp fallen leaves of autumn started up with a hollow rustle, and began dancing a wild round, with a whirlwind of dust, like some frantic orgie ushering in a revolution.

"There will be a storm!" I echoed, instinctively, looking round for the nearest shelter, and making towards it at my best pace. At such times the proudest heads will bow to very low lintels; and setting dignity against a ducking, I very willingly condescended to stoop into "The Plough."

It was a small hedge alehouse, too humble for the refinement of a separate parlour. One large tap-room served for all comers gentle or simple, if gentlefolks, except from stress of weather, ever sought such a place of entertainment. Its scanty accommodations were even meaner than usual; the Plough had suffered from the hardness of the times, and exhibited the bareness of a house recently unfurnished by the broker. The aspect of the public room was cold and cheerless. There was a mere glimmer of fire in the grate, and a single unsnuffed candle stood guttering over the neck of the stone bottle in which it was stuck, in the middle

of the plain deal table. The low ceiling, blackened by smoke, hung overhead like a canopy of gloomy clouds; the walls were stained with damp, and patches of the plaster had peeled off from the naked laths. Ornament there was none, except a solitary print, gaudily daubed in body-colours, and formerly glazed, as hinted by a small triangle of glass in one corner of the black frame. The subject, "the Shipwrecked Mariner," whose corpse, jacketted in bright sky-blue, rolled on a still brighter strip of yellow shingle, between two grass-green wheat-sheaves with white ears—but intended for foaming billows. Above all, the customary odours were wanting; the faint smell of beer and ale, the strong scent of spirits, the fumes of tobacco; none of them agreeable to a nice sense, but decidedly missed with a feeling akin to disappointment. Rank or vapid, they belonged to the place, representing, though in an infinitely lower key, the bouquet of Burgundy, the aroma of choice liqueurs—the breath of Social Enjoyment.

Yet there was no lack of company. Ten or twelve men, some young, but the majority of the middle age, and one or two advanced in years, were seated at the sordid board. As many glasses and jugs of various patterns stood before them; but mostly empty, as was the tin tankard from which they had been replenished. Only a few of the party in the neighbourhood of a brown earthenware pitcher had full cups; but of the very small ale called Adam's. Their coin and credit exhausted, they were keeping up the forms of drinking and good fellowship with plain water. From the same cause, a bundle of new clay pipes lay idle on the table, unsoiled by the Indian weed.

A glance sufficed to show that the company were of the labouring class—men with tanned, furrowed faces, and hairy freckled hands—who smelt "of the earth, earthy," and were

clad in fustian and leather, in velveteen and corduroy, glossy with wear or wet, soiled by brown clay and green moss, scratched and torn by brambles, wrinkled, warped, and threadbare with age, and variously patched—garments for need and decency, not show;—for if, amidst the prevailing russets, drabs, and olives, there was a gayer scrap of green, blue, or red, it was a tribute not to vanity but expediency—some fragment of military broadcloth or livery plush.

As I entered, the whole party turned their eyes upon me, and having satisfied themselves by a brief scrutiny that my face and person were unknown to them, thenceforward took no more notice of me than of their own shadows on the wall. I could have fancied myself invisible, they resumed their conversation with so little reserve. The topics, such as poor men discuss amongst themselves:—the dearness of bread, the shortness of work, the long hours of labour, the lowness of wages, the badness of the weather, the sickliness of the season, the signs of a hard winter, the general evils of want, poverty, and disease; but accompanied by such particular revelations, such minute details, and frank disclosures, as should only have come from persons talking in their sleep! The vulgar indelicacy, methought, with which they gossipped before me of family matters—the brutal callousness with which they exposed their private affairs, the whole history and mystery of bed, board, and hearth, the secrets of home! But a little more listening and reflection converted my disgust into pity and concern. Alas! I had forgotten that the lives of certain classes of our species have been laid almost as bare and open as those of the beasts of the field! The poor men had no domestic secrets—no private affairs! All were public—matters of notoriety—friend and foe concurring in the advertisement. The Law had ferreted their huts, and scheduled their three-legged tables and bottomless chairs.

Statistical Groses had taken notes, and printed them, of every hole in their coats. Political reporters had calculated their incomings and outgoings down to fractions of pence and half ounces of tea; and had supplied the minutiæ of their domestic economy for paragraphs and leading articles. Charity, arm in arm with curiosity, and clerical Philanthropy, linked perhaps with a religious Inquisitor, had taken an inventory of their defects moral and spiritual; whilst medical visitors had inspected and recorded their physical sores, cancerous or scrofulous, their humours, and their tumours.

Society, like a policeman, had turned upon them the full blaze of its bull's eye—exploring the shadiest recesses of their privacy, till their means, food, habits, and modes of existence were as minutely familiar as those of the animalculæ exhibited in Regent Street by the solar microscope. They had no longer any decent appearances to keep up—any shabby ones to mask with a better face—any petty shifts to slur over—any household struggles to conceal. Their circumstances were known intimately, not merely to next-door neighbours, and kith and kin, but to the whole parish, the whole county, the whole country. It was one of their last few privileges to discuss in common with the Parliament, the Press, and the Public, the deplorable details of their own affairs. Their destitution was a naked Great Fact, and they talked of it like proclaimed Bankrupts, as they were, in the wide world's Gazette.

"What matters?" said a grey-headed man, in fustian, in answer to a warning nudge and whisper from his neighbour, "If walls has ears, they are welcome to what they can ketch —ay, and the stranger to boot—if so be he don't know all about us already—for it's all in print. What we yarn, and what we spend—what we eat, and what we drink—what we wear, and the cost on it from top to toe—where we sleep,

and how many on us lie in a bed—our concarns are as common as waste land."

"And as many geese and donkeys turned on to them, I do think!" cried a young follow in velveteens—"to hear how folk crackle and bray about our states. And then the queer remedies as is prescribed, like, for a starving man! A Bible, says one—a Reading made Easy, says another—a Temperance Medal, says another—or maybe a Hagricultural Prize. But what is he to eat, I ax? Why, says one, a Corkassian Jew—says another, a cricket-ball—says another, a Maypole—and says another, the Wenus bound for Horsetrailye."

"As if idle hands and empty pockets," said the grey-headed man, "did not make signs, of themselves, for work and wages—and a hungry belly for bread and cheese."

"That's true, any how," said one of the water-drinkers. "I only wish a doctor could come at this minute, and listen with his *telescope* on my stomach, and he would hear it a-talking as plain as our magpie, and saying 'I wants wittles.'"

There was a general peal of mirth at this speech, but brief and ending abruptly, as laughter does when extorted by the odd treatment of a serious subject—a flash followed by deeper gloom. The conversation then assumed a graver tone, each man in turn recounting the trials, privations, and visitations of himself, his wife, and children, or his neighbour's—not mentioned with fierceness, intermingling oaths and threats, nor with bitterness—some few allusions, excepted, to harsh overseers or miserly masters—but as soldiers or sailors describe the hardships and sufferings they have had to encounter in their rough vocation, and evidently endured in their own persons with a manly fortitude. If the speaker's voice faltered, or his eyes moistened, it was only when he painted the sharp bones showing through the skin, the skin through the rags, of the wife of his bosom; or how the

traditional Wolf, no longer to be kept from the door, had rushed in and fastened on his young ones. What a revelation it was! Fathers, with more children than shillings per week —mothers travailing literally in the straw—infants starving before the parents' eyes, with cold, and famishing for food! Human creatures, male and female, old and young, not gnawed and torn by single woes, but worried at once by Winter, Disease, and Want, as by that triple-headed Dog, whelped in the Realm of Torments!

My ears tingled, and my cheeks flushed with self-reproach, remembering my fretful impatience under my own inflictions, no light ones either, till compared with the heavy complications of anguish, moral and physical, experienced by those poor men. My heart swelled with indignation, my soul sickened with disgust, to recal the sobs, sighs, tears, and hysterics—the lamentations and imprecations bestowed by pampered Selfishness on a sick bird or beast, a sore finger, a swelled toe, a lost rubber, a missing luxury, an ill-made garment, a culinary failure!—to think of the cold looks and harsh words cast by the same eyes and lips, eloquent in self-indulgence, on nakedness, starvation, and poverty. Wealth, with his own million of money, pointing to the new half-farthings as fitting money for the million—Gluttony, gorged with dainties, washed down by iced champagne, complacently commending his humble brethren to the brook of Elisha and the salads of Nebuchadnezzar; and Fashion, in furs and velvet, comfortably beholding her squalid sisters shivering in *robes de zephyr*, woven by winter itself, with the warp of a north, and the woof of an east wind!

"The job up at Bosely is finished," said one of the middle-aged men. "I have enjoyed but three days' work in the last fortnight, and God above knows when I shall get another, even at a shilling a day. And nine mouths to feed, big and

little—and nine backs to clothe—with the winter a-settin in —and the rent behind-hand—and never a bed to lie on, and my good woman, poor soul, ready to ——"—a choking sound and a hasty gulp of water smothered the rest of the sentence. "There must be something done for us—there MUST," he added, with an emphatic slap of his broad, brown, barky hand, that made the glasses jingle and the idle pipes clatter on the board. And every voice in the room echoed "there must," my own involuntarily swelling the chorus.

"Ay, there must, and that full soon," said the grey-headed man in fustian, with an upward appealing look, as if through the smoky clouds of the ceiling to God himself for confirmation of the necessity. "But come, lads, time's up, so let's have our chant, and then squander."

The company immediately stood up; and one of the elders, with a deep bass voice, and to a slow, sad air, began a rude song, the composition probably of some provincial poet of his own class, the rest of the party joining occasionally in a verse that served for the burden.

A spade! a rake! a hoe!
A pickaxe, or a bill!
A hook to reap, or a scythe to mow,
A flail, or what ye will—
And here's a ready hand
To ply the needful tool,
And skill'd enough, by lessons rough,
In Labour's rugged school.

To hedge, or dig the ditch,
To lop or fell the tree,
To lay the swarth on the sultry field,
Or plough the stubborn lea;

The harvest stack to bind,
The wheaten rick to thatch,
And never fear in my pouch to find
The tinder or the match.

To a flaming barn or farm
My fancies never roam;
The fire I yearn to kindle and burn
Is on the hearth of Home;
Where children huddle and crouch
Through dark long wintry days,
Where starving children huddle and crouch,
To see the cheerful rays,
A-glowing on the haggard cheek,
And not in the haggard's blaze!

To Him who sends a drought
To parch the fields forlorn,
The rain to flood the meadows with mud,
The blight to blast the corn,
To Him I leave to guide
The bolt in its crooked path,
To strike the miser's rick, and show
The skies blood-red with wrath.

A spade! a rake! a hoe!
A pickaxe, or a bill!
A hook to reap, or a scythe to mow,
A flail, or what ye will—
The corn to thrash, or the hedge to plash,
The market-team to drive,
Or mend the fence by the cover side,
And leave the game alive.

Ay, only give me work,
And then you need not fear
That I shall snare his Worship's hare,
Or kill his Grace's deer;
Break into his lordship's house,
To steal the plate so rich;
Or leave the yeoman that had a purse
To welter in a ditch.

Wherever Nature needs,
Wherever Labour calls,
No job I'll shirk of the hardest work,
To shun the workhouse walls;
Where savage laws begrudge
The pauper babe its breath,
And doom a wife to a widow's life,
Before her partner's death.

My only claim is this,
With labour stiff and stark,
By lawful turn, my living to earn,
Between the light and dark;
My daily bread, and nightly bed,
My bacon, and drop of beer—
But all from the hand that holds the land,
And none from the overseer!

No parish money, or loaf,
No pauper badges for me,
A son of the soil, by right of toil
Entitled to my fee.

No alms I ask, give me my task :
Here are the arm, the leg,
The strength, the sinews of a Man,
To work, and not to beg.

Still one of Adam's heirs,
Though doom'd by chance of birth
To dress so mean, and to eat the lean
Instead of the fat of the earth ;
To make such humble meals
As honest labour can,
A bone and a crust, with a grace to God,
And little thanks to man !

A spade ! a rake ! a hoe !
A pickaxe, or a bill !
A hook to reap, or a scythe to mow,
A flail, or what ye will—
Whatever the tool to ply,
Here is a willing drudge,
With muscle and limb, and woe to him
Who does their pay begrudge !

Who every weekly score
Docks labour's little mite,
Bestows on the poor at the temple door,
But robb'd them over night.
The very shilling he hoped to save,
As health and morals fail,
Shall visit me in the New Bastille,
The Spital, or the Gaol !

As the last ominous words ceased ringing, the candle-wick suddenly dropped into the neck of the stone bottle, and all was darkness and silence.

* * * * *

The vision is dispelled—the Fiction is gone—but a Fact and a Figure remain.

Some time since, a strong inward impulse moved me to paint the destitution of an overtasked class of females, who work, work, work, for wages almost nominal. But deplorable as is their condition, in the low deep, there is, it seems, a lower still—below that gloomy gulf a darker region of human misery,—beneath that Purgatory a Hell—resounding with more doeful wailings and a sharper outcry—the voice of famishing wretches, pleading vainly for work! work! work! —imploring as a blessing, what was laid upon Man as a curse—the labour that wrings sweat from the brow, and bread from the soil!

As a matter of conscience, that wail touches me not. As my works testify, I am of the working class myself, and in my humble sphere furnish employment for many hands, including paper-makers, draughtsmen, engravers, compositors, pressmen, binders, folders, and stitchers—and critics—all receiving a fair day's wages for a fair day's work. My gains consequently are limited—not nearly so enormous as have been realised upon shirts, slops, shawls, &c.—curiously illustrating how a man or woman might be "clothed with curses as with a garment." My fortune may be expressed without a long row of those ciphers—those 0's, at once significant of hundreds of thousands of pounds, and as many ejaculations of pain and sorrow from dependent slaves. My wealth might all be hoarded, if I were miserly, in a gallipot or a tin snuff-box. My guineas, placed edge to edge, instead of extending

from the Minories to Golden Square, would barely reach from home to Bread Street. My riches would hardly allow me a roll in them, even if turned into the new copper mites. But then, thank God! no reproach clings to my coin. No tears or blood clog the meshes, no hair, plucked in desperation, is knitted with the silk of my lean purse. No consumptive seamstress can point at me her bony forefinger, and say, "For thee, *sewing in formâ pauperis*, I am become this Living Skeleton!" or hold up to me her fatal needle, as one through the eye of which the scriptural camel must pass ere I may hope to enter heaven. No withered workwoman, shaking at me her dripping suicidal locks, can cry, in a Piercing voice, "For thee, and for six poor pence, I embroidered eighty flowers on this veil"—literally a veil of tears. No famishing labourer, his joints racked with toil, holds out to me in the palm of his broad hard hand seven miserable shillings, and mutters, "For these, and a parish loaf, for six long days, from dawn till dusk, through hot and cold, through wet and dry, I tilled thy land!" My short sleeps are peaceful; my dreams untroubled. No ghastly phantoms with reproachful faces, and silence more terrible than speech, haunt my quiet pillow. No victims of Slow Murder, ushered by the Avenging Fiends, beset my couch, and make awful appointments with me to meet at the Divine bar on the day of Judgment. No deformed human creatures—men, women, children, smirched black as Negroes, transfigured suddenly, as Demons of the Pit, clutch at my heels to drag me down, down, down, an unfathomable shaft, into a gaping Tartarus. And if sometimes in waking visions I see throngs of little faces, with features preternaturally sharp, and wrinkled brows, and dull, seared orbs,—grouped with pitying clusters of the young-eyed cherubim,—not for me, thank Heaven! did those crippled children become prematurely old; and

precociously evaporate, like so much steam power, the "dew of their youth."

For me, then, that doleful cry from the Starving Unemployed has no extrinsic horror; no peculiar pang, beyond that sympathetic one which must affect the species in general. Nevertheless, amidst the dismal chorus, one complaining voice rings distinctly on my inward ear; one melancholy Figure flits prominently before my mind's eye,—vague of feature indeed, and in form with only the common outlines of humanity,—but the Eidolon of a real person, a living breathing man, with a known name. One whom I have never seen in the flesh; never spoken with; yet whose very words a still small voice is even now whispering to me, I know not whence, like the wind from a cloud.

For months past, that indistinct Figure, associated, as in a dream, with other dim images, but all mournful—stranger faces, male and female, convulsed with grief—huge hard hands, and smaller and tenderer ones, wrung in speechless anguish, and everlasting farewells—involved with obscure ocean waves, and momentary glimpses of outlandish scenery —for months past, amidst trials of my own, in the intervals of acute pain, perchance even in my delirium, and through the variegated tissue of my own interests and affairs, that sorrowful Vision has recurred to me, more or less vividly, with the intense sense of suffering, cruelty, and injustice, and the strong emotions of pity and indignation, which originated with its birth.

It may be, that some peculiar condition of the body inducing a morbid state of mind—some extreme excitability of the nerves, and through them of the moral sensibility, concurred to induce so deep an impression, to make so warm a sympathy attach itself to a mere Phantom, the representative of an obscure individual, an utter stranger. The Reader

must judge : and when the case of my unknown, unconscious, invisible client shall be laid before him, will be able to say whether it required any unnatural sensitiveness of the system, any extraordinary softening of the heart or brain, to feel a strong human interest in the fate of Gifford White.

In the spring of the present year this very unfortunate and very young man was indicted, at the Huntingdon Assizes, for throwing the following letter, addressed externally and internally to the Farmers of Bluntisham, Hunts, into a strawyard :—

"We are determined to set fire to the whole of this place, if you don't set us to work, and burn you in your beds, if there is not an alteration. What do you think the young men are to do if you don't set them to work? They must do something. The fact is, we cannot go on any longer. We must commit robbery, and every thing that is contrary to your wish.

"I am,

"An Enemy."

For this offence, admitted by his plea, the prisoner, aged eighteen, was sentenced, by a judge since deceased, to Transportation for Life !

Far be it from me to palliate Incendiarism. Least of all, when so many conflagrations have recently illuminated the horizon ; and so near the time when the memory of that Arch Incendiary Guy Faux will be revived by effigies and bonfires. I am fully aware of the risk of even this appeal, at such a season, but, with that pleading Shade before me, dare the reddest reflections that may be cast on this paper.

Only catch a real Incendiary, bring his guilt clearly home to him, and let him suffer the extreme penalty of the law. Hang him. Or, if absolutely opposed to capital punishment and inclined towards the philanthropy of a very French philosophy, adopt the Christianly substitute, recommended

in the "Mysteries of Paris," and blind the criminal. Let fire avenge fire, and, according to the prescription for Prince Arthur, with irons hot burn out both his eyes. Cruel and extreme as such tortures may seem, they would scarcely expiate one of the most dastardly and atrocious of human crimes, inasmuch as the perpetrator can neither control its extent nor calculate the results.

The truth is, my faith stops far short of the popular belief in the prevalence of wilful and malignant Fire-raising—that an epidemic of that inflammatory character is so rife and raging as represented in the provinces. I am too jealous of the national character, too chary of the good name of my humble countrymen, and think too well of "a bold peasantry, our country's pride," to look on them, willingly, as a mere pack of Samson's foxes, running from farm to farm with fire brands tied to their tails. If there be any notable increase in the number of fires, some portion of the excess may be fairly attributable to causes which have converted simple risks into Doubly Hazardous; for example, the prevalence of cigar smoking, and especially the substitution for the old tinder-box of dangerous chemical contrivances, facile of ignition, and distributed by myriads throughout the country. Talismans, that like the Arabian ones, on a slight rubbing, place a Demon at the command of the possessor—spells which have subjected the Fire Spirit to the instant invocation not merely of the wicked, but of the weak and the witless, the infant and the idiot. Generally, we work and play with the element more profusely than formerly; witness the glowing flames, flakes, sparks, and cinders, that sweep across streets, over seas and rivers, and along railroads from the chimneys, funnels, and furnaces, of the factories, and floating and flying conveyances of Pluto, Vulcan, and Company. Another cause, Spontaneous Combustion, has lately

been convicted of the destruction of the railway station at New Cross; and there is no reason to suppose that conflagrations from carelessness, and excessive house-warmings from inebriety, are less common than of old. Children will still play with fire; servants, town and country, persist in snuffing long wicks, as well as noses, with finger and thumb; and Agricultural distress has not so annihilated the breed of Jolly Farmers, but that one, here and there, is still capable of blowing himself out, and putting his candle to bed.

In the meantime, vulgar Exaggeration ascribes every "rapid consumption" of property, not clearly traceable to accident, to a malicious design. The English public, according to Goldsmith, are prone to panics, and he instances them as arming themselves with thick gloves and stout cudgels against certain popular bugbears in the shapes of mad dogs. And a fatal thing it is, proverbially, for the canine race to get an ill name. But a panic becomes a far more tragical affair when it arms one class of society against another; and instead of mere brutes and curs of low degree, animals of our own species are hunted down and hung, or at best, all but banished to another world, by transportation for life. It is difficult to believe that some such local panic did not influence the very severe sentence passed on Gifford White. Indeed the existence of something of the kind seems intimated by the judge himself, along with the extraordinary dictum that a verbal burn is worse than the actual cautery. Lord Abinger said :—

"The offence was of a most atrocious character; and it might almost be said, that the sending of letters threatening to burn the property of the parties to whom they were addressed was worse than putting the threat into execution; for when a man lost his property by fire, he at least knew the worst of it, but he to whom such threats were made, was made to live in a state of continual terror and alarm."

Very true—and very harshly applied. The Farmers of

Bluntisham are not of my acquaintance; but presuming them to be not more nervous and timorsome than farmers in general, might not their terror and alarm have been pacified on rather easier terms? Would not the banishment of the culprit for seven, or at most fourteen years, have allowed time, ample time, for the yeomanry nerves to have recovered their tone; for their affrighted hair, erect as stubble, to have subsided prone as rolled grass; nay, for the very name of Gifford White to have evaporated from their agricultural heads? Were I a Bluntisham farmer, I could not eat with relish another rasher of bacon, or swallow with satisfaction another glass of strong ale, without protesting publicly against such a sacrifice to my supposed aspen-fits, and setting on foot a petition amongst my neighbours for a mitigation of that severe and satirical sentence which condemned a fellow parishioner to expiate my fears by fifty-two years of penance —according to the scriptural calculation of human life—in the land of the kangaroo. I could not sleep soundly, and know, that for my sake a son of the same soil had been rooted out like a common weed—severed from kith and kin; from hearth and home, if he had one; from his mother-country, hard step-mother though she had proved; from a familiar land and native air, to a foreign one and a new climate, with strange faces around him, and strange stars above him,—a banished man, not for a little while, or for a long while, but for ever!

But, methinks I hear a voice say, it was necessary to make an example—a proceeding always accompanied by a certain degree of hardship, if not injustice, as regards the party selected to be punished *in terrorem;* unless the choice be made of a criminal especially deserving such a painful preference—as for robbery with personal violence: whereas there appear to be no aggravations of the offence for which Gifford

White was sentenced to a murderer's atonement. On the contrary, he pleaded guilty, a course generally admitted as an extenuation of guilt. His youth ought to have been a circumstance in his favour; and, above all, the consideration that a threat does not necessarily involve the intent, much less the deed. All who have been led, by word or writing, to hope or fear, for good or evil, have had reason to know how far is Promise from Performance,—as far as England from New South Wales. Expectants never die the sooner for golden prospects held out to them; and threatened folks are long-lived, to a proverb. And why? Because the enemy who announces his designs is the least dangerous: as the Scotch say, "his bark is waur than his bite." The truth is, menaces are about the most abundant, idle, and empty of human vapourings; the mere puffings, blowings, gruntings, and growlings from the safety-valves and waste-pipes of high-pressure engines. The promissory notes of threateners to large amounts are ludicrously associated, instead of payment, with "no effects." Who of us has not heard a good mother, a fond mother, a doting mother, but sharp tempered, promise her own dear but troublesome offspring, her very pets, such savage inflictions, such breaking of bones and knocking off plaguy little heads, as ought, sincerely uttered, to have consigned her to the custody of the police? There, as my Uncle Toby says, she found vent. Who has never known a friend, a worthy man, but a passionate one, to indulge in such murderous threats against the life, body, and limbs of a tight boot-maker, or a loose tailor, a blunt creditor, or a sharp critic, as ought, if in earnest, to have placed him in handcuffs and a straight waistcoat? But nobody takes these blazes of temper for the burnings of settled malignity—these harmless flashes of sheet lightning for the destructive gleam of the forked. It is quite possible

therefore, that the incendiary letter of Gifford White, though breathing Congreves and Lucifers, was purely theoretical; albeit read by the judge as if in serious earnest, like the fulminating prospectuses of the Duc de Normandie or Captain Warner.

I confess to have searched, in vain, through the epistle for any animus of peculiar atrocity. Its address, generally to the farmers, shows it not to have been the inspiration of personal malice or private revenge. The threat is not a direct and positive one, as in resolved retaliation for some by-gone wrong; but put hypothetically, and rather in the nature of a warning of probable consequences, dependent on future contingencies. The wish of the writer is obviously not father to the menace: on the contrary, he expostulates, and appeals, methinks most touchingly, to the reason, the justice, even the compassion, of the very parties—to be burnt in their beds. So clear a proof, to me, of the absence of any serious intent, or malice prepense, that the only agitation from the fall of such a missive in my farmyard, if I had one, would be the flutter amongst the poultry. At least theirs would be the only personal terror and alarm,—for, with other feelings, who could fail to be moved by a momentous question and declaration re-echoed by hundreds and thousands of able and willing but starving labourers. "What are we to do if you don't set us to work? We must do something. The fact is, we cannot go on any longer!"

Can the wholesale emigration, so often proposed, be only transportation in disguise for using such language in common with Gifford White?

To me—speaking from my heart, and recording my deliberate opinions on a material that, frail as it is, will long outlast my own fabric,—there is something deeply affecting in the spectacle of a young man, in the prime of health and

vigour, offering himself, a voluntary slave, in the Labour-market without a purchaser—eagerly proffering to barter the use of his body, the day-long exertion of his strength, the wear and tear of flesh and blood, bone and muscle, for the common necessaries of life—earnestly craving for bread on the penal conditions prescribed by his Creator—and in vain—in vain! Well for those who enjoy each Blessing of earth that there are volunteers to work out the Curse! Well for the drones of the social hive that there are bees of so industrious a turn, willing for an infinitesimal share of the honey to undertake the labour of its fabrication!

Let these considerations avail an unfortunate man, or rather youth, perhaps an oppressed one, subject to the tyranny of some such ticket system as lately required the interference of the Home Secretary, in behalf of the labourers of another county.——

Methinks I see him, poor Phantom! an impertinent unit of a surplus population, humbly pleading for bread, and offered an acre of stones—to be cleared at five farthings a rood. Work and wages for the asking!—with the double alternative of the Union-house, or a free passage—the North-West one—to the still undiscovered coast of Bohemia!——

Is a rash youth, so wrought on, to be eternally Ex-Isled from this sweet little one of our own, for only throwing a few intemperate "thoughts that breathe and words that burn" into an anonymous letter?

Let these things plead for a fellow-creature, goaded, perhaps, by the sense of wrong, as well as the physical pangs of hunger, and driven by the neglect of all milder applications to appeal to the selfish fears of men who will neither read the signs of the times, nor heed warnings, unless written, like Belshazzar's, in letters of fire!

One thing is certain. These are not times for visiting

with severity the offences of the labouring poor, a class who, it is admitted by all parties, have borne the severest trials that can afflict the soul and body of man, with an exemplary fortitude and a patience almost superhuman. A great fact at which every true Englishman should exult, as at a National Victory, as in moral heroism it is. I, for one, am proud of my poor countrymen, and naturally loth to believe that a character which so reluctantly combines with disaffection, and indulges so sparely in outbreak, will freely absorb so vile a spirit as that of incendiarism. At any rate, before rashly adopting such a conclusion, common justice and common sense bid me look elsewhere for the causes of any unusual number of fires in the rural districts. As a mere matter of patriotism, one would rather ascribe such unfilial outrages to an alien than to a son of the soil. We have lately seen a Foreign Prince, an ally, in a time of peace, speculating with much playful naïveté on the best modes for squibbing our shipping and rocketing our harbours—the facility with which he could ignite the Thames and mull the Medway—sink the Cinque Ports—blow off Beachy's head, shiver Deal into splinters, and knock the two Reculver steeples into one. His Highness, it is true, contemplated a bellicose state, ceremoniously proclaimed according to the usage of polite nations; but suppose some outlandish savage, as uncivilised as unshorn, say from Terra del Fuego, animated with an insane hostility to England, and burning to test his skill in Pyrotechnics—might not such a barbarian be tempted to dispense with a formal declaration of war, and make a few experimental essays how to introduce his treacherous combustibles into our perfidious towns and hamlets? Foreign incendiaries for me, rather than native; and accident or Spontaneous Combustion before either! But if we must believe in it home-made—surely, in preference to

the industrious labourer, suspicion should fall on those sturdy trampers that infest the country, the foremost to crave for food and money, the last to ask for work, and one of whom might light up a dozen parishes. If it be otherwise, if a class eminently loyal, patient, peaceable, and rational, have really become such madmen throwing about fire, it is high time, methinks, with universal Artesian borings, to begin to scuttle our island for fear of its being burnt. But no—that Shadow of an Incendiary, with uplifted hands, and streaming repentant eyes, disavows with earnest gesture the foul intent: and shadow as he is, my belief acquits him, and makes me echo the imaginary sigh with which he fades again into the foggy distance between me and Port Sydney.

It is in your power, Sir James Graham, to lay the Ghost that is haunting me. But that is a trifle. By a due intercession with the earthly Fountain of Mercy, you may convert a melancholy Shadow into a happier Reality—a righted man—a much pleasanter image to mingle in our waking visions as well as in those dreams which, as Hamlet conjectures may soothe or disturb us in our coffins. Think, Sir, of poor Gifford White—inquire into his hard case, and give it your humane consideration, as that of a fellow-man with an immortal soul—a "possible angel"—to be met hereafter face to face.

To me, should this appeal meet with any success, it will be one of the dearest deeds of my pen. I shall not repent a wide deviation from my usual course: or begrudge the pain and trouble caused me by the providential visitings of an importunate Phantom. In any case, my own responsibility is at an end. I have relieved my heart, appeased my conscience, and absolved my soul.

T. Hood.

[This appeal was so earnest and so urgent, that, at the risk of overburdening the volume with compositions which are not my father's, I venture to insert, whole and unabridged, the answer which Sir James Graham returned to an address, which, however publicly made, was a direct personal pleading of the strongest kind.

The answer runs thus :—

"Sir James Graham presents his compliments to Mr. Hood, and begs to acknowledge the Magazine accompanying his letter of the 30th instant.

Whitehall, 31 October, 1844."]

EPIGRAM.

ON HER MAJESTY'S VISIT TO THE CITY, 1844.

We've heard of comets, blazing things,
With "fear of change" perplexing Kings;
But, lo! a novel sight and strange,
A Queen who does not fear a 'Change!

ON THE QUEEN'S VISIT TO THE CITY.

BY A TRADESMAN IN CORNHILL.

Sure the measure is strange
That all Commerce so stops,
And, to open a 'Change,
Make us shut up our shops.

SONNET TO A SONNET.

Particularly commended, with the Fifth of Sir Philip Sidney's, and the pages of Froissart, to the perusal of certain Journalists across the Channel; and generally to their *Young* countrymen, who would do well to affect, with the beards and moustaches of the olden time, the gallant courtesy of the ancient manners.

—♦—

RARE Composition of a Poet-Knight,
Most chivalrous amongst chivalric men,
Distinguish'd for a polish'd lance and pen
In tuneful contest, and the tourney-fight;
Lustrous in scholarship, in honour bright,
Accomplish'd in all graces current then,
Humane as any in historic ken,
Brave, handsome, noble, affable, polite,
Most courteous to that race become of late
So fiercely scornful of all kind advance,
Rude, bitter, coarse, implacable in hate
To Albion, plotting ever her mischance,—
Alas! fair Verse, how false and out of date
Thy phrase "*sweet enemy*" applied to France!

EPIGRAM.

ON A PICTURE (407) IN THE BRITISH INSTITUTION, 1843.

—♦—

SIR, let me just your tasteful eye enveigle
To yonder Painting, of the Madman Eagle.
Which, *that* by Poole? Excuse me, sir, I beg,
I really have no wish to catch "The Plague."

MRS. PECK'S PUDDING.

A CHRISTMAS ROMANCE.

"THE disappointment will be dreadful," said Mrs. Peck, speaking to herself, and looking from the dingy floor, up the bare wall, at the blank ceiling. "But how to get one Heaven only knows!"

It was the afternoon of the 24th of December. Christmas Day was at hand, and for the first time in her existence Mrs. Peck was without a plum-pudding. For years past she had been reduced in life; but never so reduced as that! She was in despair. Not that she particularly doted on the composition; but it was a sort of superstition with her that, if she failed to taste the dish in question on that festival, she should never again enjoy luck in this world, or perhaps in the next. It was a foolish notion: but many enlightened Christians cling religiously to similar opinions; for example, as to pancakes on Shrove Tuesday, or hot cross buns on a Good Friday. So with Mrs. Peck a plum-pudding on Christmas day was an article of her faith.

Yes—she must have one, though it should prove but a dumpling of larger growth. But how? Buying was out of the question: she had not half a farthing in the house—a widow without a mite!—and stealing was not to be thought of—she must borrow or beg. Once arrived at this conclusion, she acted on it without delay. There were plenty of little emissaries at hand, in the shape of her own children, for the necessary errands—namely, Careful Susan, Dirty Polly, Greedy Charley, Whistling Dick, Little Jack, and Ragged

Peter, so called from a fragment of linen that usually dangled behind him, like a ship's ensign from its stern.

"Children!" said Mrs. Peck, "I am going to have a Christmas plum-pudding."

At such an unexpected announcement, the children shouted, jumped about, and clapped their skinny hands. But their mirth was of brief duration. Second thoughts, for once none of the best, soon reminded them that the cupboard was as bare as Mother Hubbard's! while the maternal pocket was equally empty. How the thing was to happen, therefore they knew not—unless by some such fairy feat as sent black puddings tumbling down the chimney; or some such scriptural miracle as showered quails and manna in the Wilderness; or that one, which Greedy Charley remembered to have seen depicted in blue and white on a Dutch tile, of horned cattle and sheep coming down from Heaven to St. Peter, in a monster bundle. But having vainly watched the hearths, the walls, and the ceiling, for a minute or so, they gave up all such extravagant expectations. The hopes of Ragged Peter were like his nether garment, in tatters; and the dingy face of Dirty Polly looked darker than ever. There was a dead silence, at last broken by little Jack.

"But mammy, you have got no plums."

"And no flour," said Careful Susan.

"And no suet," said Dirty Polly.

"Nor no sugar," said Ragged Peter.

"And no almonds and orange-peel," said Greedy Charley.

"No eggs," said Careful Susan.

"And never a sarcepan," said Whistling Dick.

"As to almonds and orange peel," said Mrs. Peck, "we must do without. Our pudding will be a very plain one. That is to say, if we get it at all, for there is not one ingre-

dient in the house. We must borrow and beg; so get ready, all of you, to run on my errands."

"Let me go for the plums, mother," said Greedy Charley; but knowing his failing, she assigned to him to plead to Mr. Crop, the butcher, for a morsel of suet. Dirty Polly was to extract a few currents and raisins and some sugar, if she could, out of Mr. Perry, the grocer; Little Jack was to wheedle a trifle of flour from Mr. Stone, the baker; and Careful Susan was to get three eggs of Mrs. Saukins, who did mangling in her parlour and kept fowls in her cellar. Whistling Dick undertook to borrow a saucepan; and as Ragged Peter insisted also on a commission, he was sent to hunt about the streets, and pick up a little orange peel—candied, if possible.

As the children had no promenade dresses to put on, they were soon ready. Susan merely reduced the angles of her bonnet front to something of a semicircle; and Dirty Polly, with a single tug, made her short scanty garment look a little more like a frock, and less like a kilt. She might, indeed have washed her face, as Ragged Peter might have tucked in some dingy linen, with personal advantage; but as they were not going to a juvenile party, they waived the ceremony. Little Jack clapped on his crownless hat; Greedy Charley took his jew's harp, the gift of a generous charity-boy; Whistling Dick set up his natural pipe; and away they went, in search of a pudding by instalments.

As soon as they were gone, Mrs. Peck, having made up the fire, washed her hands and arms very clean, and then seating herself at the round deal table, with her elbows on the board, and her chin between her palms, began to calculate her chances of success. The flour, provided Mr. Stone, and not his wife, was in the shop, she made sure of. The fruit was certain—the suet was very possible—the saucepan as

good as in her own hand—in short, being of a sanguine temperament, she dreamed till she saw before her a smoking hot plum-pudding, of respectable size, and dappled with dark spots, big and little, like a Dalmatian dog.

In the meantime, Charley, twanging all the way on his jew's, arrived at the butcher's, who was standing before the shop with his back to the road, admiring, as only butchers can admire, the rows of fat carcases and prime joints on the tender-hooks before him. Could that meat have known his sentiments concerning it, what proud flesh it would have been! Hearing a step behind him, and anticipating a customer, he turned round with the usual "What d'ye buy?"

"I haven't got no money to buy with," said Charley, "or else"—and looking round for the desired object, he pointed to it with his finger—"I'd buy that ere lump of suet."

"And what do you want with suet?" asked the butcher.

"If you please, sir," replied Charley, "it's for our pudding. But mother is out of money: so if you don't let her have that bit of suet, either on credit or for charity ——"

"Well, what then?" said the butcher.

"Why then," said Charley, "it will be the first time in our lives that we've gone without plum-pudding on this blessed festival."

The butcher was a big florid man, bloated and reddened, as persons of his trade are said to be, by constantly imbibing invisible beef-tea and mutton-broth, or, as it is called, the smell of the meat. But, although thus appropriating by minute particles the flesh and fat of sheep, oxen, and pigs, he was far from becoming a brute. He cast a kindly glance at the poor boy, who looked sickly and ill-fed, and then a triumphant one at his halves and quarters, glorious with nature's red and white, and gay with sprigs of holly, suggest-

ing the opportune reflection that Christmas comes but once a year.

"There—take it, boy—you're welcome to it, gratis, by way of a Christmas box—and my compliments of the season to your mother."

So saying, he tossed the suet to Charley, who, forgetting in his joy to thank his benefactor, ran straight home with the treasure, as delighted as if he had just won the Prize Ox in a Beef-Union Lottery.

The success of Dirty Polly was less decisive. Before entering the grocer's shop, she took a long, longing look through the window, unconsciously nibbling at her own fingers, instead of those delicious Jordan almonds, and that crisp candied citron and orange peel—and sucking in imagination at those beautiful Smyrna figs, and Damascus dates, and French plums, so temptingly displayed in round drums and fancy boxes, with frills of tinted paper round each compartment. And there, too, were the very articles she wanted —new currants from Zante—rich Malaga rasins, or of the sun, or sultanas—with samples of sugar of every shade and quality, from a fine light sand to a coarse dark gravel; but, alas! all ticketed at impracticable rates, in obtrusive figures! The owner had marked a price on every thing except the long twisted sticks of sugar-candy and the canes of cinnamon that leaned against the China figure. "Will he give anything away for nothing," she asked herself, "if I beg ever so?" The China mandarin nodded his head, and she stepped in.

The grocer himself was in the shop, in his snow-white apron, busily dusting, with a clean cloth, some imaginary impurities from the polished counter. He was not a harsh man, but a particular one, scrupulously neat in his apparel, and cleanly in his person. The slovenly frock and grubby

flesh of dirty Polly did not therefore prepossess him in her favour. He hastily took down a pair of dazzling bright scales and asked her what she wanted. But Polly was silent. She was haunted by those large black numerals, no figures of fun, but formidable to penniless poverty, as giants with clubs. The grocer again inquired what she wanted.

"Why, then, if you please, sir," said Polly, "it's raisins, and currants, and brown sugar."

"How much of each?"

"As much, sir," replied Polly, dropping a low curtsey, "as you'll please to give us."

"Pshaw!" said the grocer.

"It's for a Christmas pudding," said Polly, beginning to whimper; "and if you don't take pity on us, we shall have none at all."

The grocer was silent, and turned away from her towards his shelves and canisters.

"Do, sir—pray do," said Polly, wringing her hands and beginning to cry, not much to the advantage of her looks, as the tears washed away the dirt in stripes; and still less when she wiped her cheeks and eyes with the skirt of a frock that was daggled with mud. Luckily the grocer's back was still turned, so that he did not see the grimy drops which fell on his bright mahogany.

"Pray, pray, pray—only a few plums and currants, and a little, a very little sugar," said Polly, between her sobs.

"There," said the grocer, turning suddenly round, and thrusting a square paper of something into her hand. "Take that, and tell your mother to make a good use of it."

In the eagerness of her joy, for the thing felt like a money-box, Dirty Polly hurried out of the shop, and sure in the absence of sugar and plums of the means of buying

them, she ran home to her mother with the speed of a young heifer.

The next subject for experiment was Mr. Stone, the baker; but unfortunately Mr. Stone was from home, and his helpmate was at the desk in the shop, in charge of the pecks, quarterns, and half-quarterns, the fancy twists, and the French rolls. She was a little pale woman, with quick grey eyes, and a sharp-pointed nose, so sharp and pointed that she might have drilled with it the holes in the butter-biscuits. A glance at little Jack and the receptacle he carried informed her at once of his errand.

"Flour, eh? And in that odd thing!"

"Yes, ma'am," said little Jack. "When poor daddy was alive it was one of his double nightcaps; but mammy has turned it into a flour bag by cutting-off one end."

"A quartern, I suppose," said Mrs. Stone, going towards the large tin scale.

"If you please, ma'am," said Jack, "and be as good as not to let it be seconds or middlins, but the best flour."

"There then, child," said Mrs. Stone, holding out one hand with the full bag, and the other for the money.

"There's no money, ma'am," said little Jack. "Mammy's not got any. The flour isn't to be paid for."

"No, no—that won't do," said Mrs. Stone, "I'm not going to book it."

"We don't want you to," said little Jack.

"You don't?" exclaimed Mrs. Stone.

"No, ma'am," said little Jack. "I'm begging, ma'am,—it's for charity."

"In that case," said Mrs. Stone, deliberately returning the flour into the great tin scale, "charity begins at home." So saying, she tossed the empty nightcap into the black face of the urchin, who, beginning to cry and having nothing else to

wipe his eyes with, made use of the flour-bag, which soon converted his woe into dough.

"It's for our Christmas pud—pud—pudding," he blubbered. "We only had a very tiddy one last year, and now there won't be none at all."

"A Christmas fiddlestick!" exclaimed Mrs. Stone. "Here, come hither, you little wretch, and I will give you something worth all the creature comforts in the world."

"Is it good to eat?" asked little Jack.

"To eat!" cried Mrs. Stone, with upraised hands and eyes. "Oh, belly gods! belly gods! belly gods!"—a singular exclamation enough for a woman who sold fancy bread and took in bakings. "When will the poor leave off hankering after the flesh-pots of Egypt!"

"I don't know," said little Jack.

"No, but your mother might!" retorted Mrs. Stone. "A quartern of flour indeed! When will she ask for heavenly manna?"

"Perhaps she will," said Jack, "arter she's finished her pudding."

"There again!" exclaimed Mrs. Stone, "nothing but gluttony. But come this way,"—and she led little Jack into the parlour, behind the shop, where she first unlocked her bureau, and then opened a private drawer. "There!" she said, thrusting a paper parcel into his tiny hand—"there's spiritual food—go home and tell your mother to feed you well with it."

Little Jack took the gift with the best bow he could make To be sure it was not flour, but the packet might contain Embden groats, which was better than nothing, and he was fond of gruel; so he made the best of his way home, not quite so well pleased as Greedy Charley, or Dirty Polly, but better satisfied than Careful Susan.

She had picked her way through the dirt to Mrs. Saukins's, before whose door a spangled bantam, with a magnificent red comb and wattles, was strutting about, cock-sure of possessing the handsomest feather-trousers in the whole parish; and responding at intervals with a screeching chuckle to a more distant cackle in the cellar. Accepting the hint of this bird of good omen, Susan at once ascended the steps, and walking into the mangling parlour, explained her wants to the proprietor.

"By all means," said Mrs. Saukins. "Three eggs—yes, certainly—I'll fetch 'em directly—warranted new-laid—hark! there's Polly Phemus."

"Polly who?" said Susan.

"Polly Phemus. I give female names to all my hens; and know every one by her voice. Yes, that's her—black with a white tuft—a Polish everlasting layer—she's in her nest, in the old candle-box up in the dark corner. Well—three eggs—I think you said three?—Yes, certainly—you shall have them warm, as I may say, from the hen."

"Thankee, ma'am," said Susan. "Mother can't pay for them now, but she will out of her very first money."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mrs. Saukins. "That alters the case. I'm very sorry to deny—but eggs is eggs now, and the new-laid uns fetches tuppence a piece. Besides, it's not the season, and my poultry don't lay."

"*Kuk-kuk-kuk-a-larcock!*" cried the hen in the cellar.

"*Larcock!*" echoed the spangled bantam.

"No, they don't lay!" said the unblushing Mrs. Saukins. "And if they did, my fowls pay ready money for their barley, and can't afford to give credit."

"Then you won't let us have them?" said Susan.

"It's unpossible," said Mrs. Saukins. "My poultry has suffered such bad debts already. If they once knew I booked,

they'd turn pale in the combs, and leave off laying directly. They've done it afore—yes—often and often. I'm very sorry I'm sure—and if it was anything else—for example, a little mangling——"

"You're very kind," said Susan, "but we've got no linen. So you won't oblige us with the eggs?"

"Dear me, no—I said no," replied Mrs. Saukins. "My poultry is my partner, and would dissolve directly. Their terms for new-laid is tuppence a piece, cash down, or three for sixpence. That's the lowest; but to a friend I'd venture to go so far as to give one in—that one there, in the little moss basket in the window. To be sure the flies has spotted it a little, till it looks more like a thrush's, but it's a hen's—and as fresh a one as ever was broke in a basin."

"But I haven't got sixpence," said Susan.

"The more's the pity," said Mrs. Saukins, "for my hens is imperative. My mangle sometimes accommodates with credit, but my poultry won't. Birds is so cunning, and my fowls in particular. I do really believe they would know a bad shilling from a good one."

"But mother promises faithfully to pay," said Susan.

"No, no," said Mrs. Saukins. "My poultry won't take promises. They know pence from piecrust—you might offer them a bushel of promises, and promissory notes besides, without getting an egg out of them—but only show them the money, and they go off to their nestes and lay like lambs."

"There goes our pudding then!" said Susan, in a tone of deep dejection.

"Do you mean a Christmas pudding—a plum one?" inquired Mrs. Saukins.

"I do," replied Susan. "It will be the first time that we have missed having one, and mother will feel it dreadfully. It's quite a religious point with her."

"Well, that's lucky!" exclaimed Mrs. Saukins, "for if I can't oblige with the eggs for a pudding, I can favour with a receipt for making one—rich, yet economical."

"I would rather have the eggs," thought Susan; but as the pudding promised to be anything but a rich one, and the recipe professed to be a cheap one, she thought it prudent to take advantage of the offer. Accordingly, the document having been transcribed, she put the copy in her pocket, and returned home, the least satisfied of all the foraging party with the result of her expedition.

Ragged Peter, it is true, had failed equally in his search for orange-peel. Whether some elderly lady or gentleman had stepped on a piece, at the cost of a compound fracture, and so had sharpened *pro tempore* the vigilance of the police, or whether it had become the fashion to eat the rind with the fruit, there was not a morsel of it to be picked up, candied or uncandied. But to make amends for this disappointment, in passing along a street at the West End, the ragged boy had the good luck to be espied by a personage who had before time noticed him, on account of some fancied resemblance to a deceased nephew. Peter's eyes twinkled with joy as he recognised his old acquaintance in his splendid livery; and the more from remembering that at their last meeting he had been presented with some of the requisites for a plum-pudding. He crossed the road, therefore, with alacrity, in compliance with the friendly signal from the powdered gentleman at the open street-door.

The porter was a very tall and very portly man, with a very convex chest, and a very stiff frill projecting from it, from top to bottom, like a palisade to keep off all intruders on his heart or bosom. Nor was there anything very promising to poor boys in general in his livery, blue turned up with red, and trimmed with gold lace, making him look

merely a free translation of a parish beadle. Nevertheless, the porter was a good-natured fellow; and his glance was genial, and his voice was kindly, as he accosted the ragged child.

"Well, young un!—Where now?—Do you remember me?"

"Yes, sir," said Peter, with a cheerful smile. "You give me once a pocketful of almonds and reasons."

"Ah, that was after our dinner-party," said the porter. "I've none to-day."

Peter sighed, and was turning away from the steps, a movement that exhibited the dilapidations in his rear, when he was recalled by the same friendly voice. Peter stopped.

"Stay here till I come back." And the gentle giant went inwards, whence he presently returned with a bundle, which he placed in Peter's arms. "There, take that—it's good stuff—and tell your mother to do her best with it."

"We shall have a pudding, anyhow," thought Peter, not doubting that the bundle of good stuff had been made up by contributions from the cook and housekeeper; wherefore, spluttering some broken thanks to the porter, he ran home with his rags fluttering in the wind, as fast as he could scamper.

The last of the adventurers was Whistling Dick. To the tune of "O where, and O where," he had successively visited the whole of his mother's friends and acquaintance—no great number in all, as often happens to a widow with a limited income—but from nobody could he obtain a loan of the indispensable culinary utensil. One had lent her saucepan already; another had burnt a hole in it; a third had it on the fire with the family dinner; a fourth had pawned it, but his mother was welcome to take it out; and a fifth, an

Irishwoman, had never had any saucepan at all except the frying-pan.

"I do believe," said Dick, "if there is such things as saucepans in kitchens, they have all asked for a holiday, like the servants, and gone out for a day's pleasure."

At last he gave up the search in despair, and was walking slowly homewards, when his attention was attracted by a tapping at a parlour-window. He looked up and recognised, over the Venetian blind, the three faces of the young Masters Britton, who had once called him into the house to whistle to them.

"Who knows," thought Dick, "if I am invited in again, but I may make friends with the cook, and so get the lend of a saucepan?"

But the hope was fallacious. He was indeed asked in; but the moment he mentioned the object of his expedition, and confessed his design on the kitchen, the youngsters, one and all, declared that the thing was impossible. Their mamma was out, and the cook was such a termagant, and, that morning particularly, in so fierce a temper, that he might as well confront a fiery dragon. But what did he want with a saucepan?

"To bile our puddin' in," said Dick. "It's Christmas time, you know; and we don't like to miss keepin' it."

At the mention of Christmas and keeping it, the young Brittons withdrew into a corner, and held a whispered consultation, which seemed a long one, before they broke up, and clustered again round their *protégé*.

"Do you ever play at a round game?" inquired Master John.

"Sometimes," answered Dick. "Only I harn't got a hoop."

The young Brittons looked in some perplexity at each other.

"You know what counters are, don't you?" asked Master William.

"Yes," replied Dick; "they nail bad ha'pence to them."

The young Brittons were again disconcerted by this answer.

"He don't understand us," observed Master William.

"Give it him at once," said Master Benjamin.

Thus instructed, Master John advanced close up to Dick, and poked something into his hand, which the receiver thoroughly looked at, and then in turn at each of the young gentlemen.

"It's to play with," said Master John.

"You'll find it very amusing," said Master William.

"But you must whistle us a tune for it," said Master Benjamin.

Dick immediately complied, and struck up "Sich a gittin' up Stairs," but rather dolefully: he would have preferred a good-sized, well-tinned saucepan to the thing in his hand, or all the toys in the world. However, a trifle is better than nothing; so, thrusting it into his pocket, he took leave of the young gentlemen, and returned home, whither we will follow him.

The Widow Peck has been described as a woman of sanguine disposition. We left her sitting with her elbows on the table, and her chin between her hands, with a dreamy steamy plum-pudding in all its glory before her—a vision not at all dispelled by the arrival of Greedy Charley with a real substantial lump of suet. He was closely followed by Dirty Polly, but, alas! without those conical paper bags associated with sugar and spice, and all that is nice, in grocery.

"What! no raisins—no currants—no sugar—no nothing?"

"Yes,—that!" said Dirty Polly, throwing her packet on the table; "and you're to make a good use of it."

The mother caught up the packet, and impatiently tearing off the envelope, in a faint voice proclaimed the contents.

"A square of yellow soap!"

"A square of yellow soap!" repeated both of the children.

"I should like to know of Heaven," said the widow, holding up the article towards the ceiling, "how I am to use *that* in a pudding!" But Heaven made no answer.

"It's for washing my face with!" cried Dirty Polly, very indignantly. "I saw him stare at me!"

"Well, there can't be a plum-pudding without plums," said the widow, looking the very picture of despair. But her lamentations were cut short by the entrance of Little Jack: he had brought the flour, of course.

"No, mammy," said Jack, "I've got no flour at all; but there's grits."

"Grits!" exclaimed the widow. "Who wants grits?" But the case, when opened, appeared even worse. "Grits, indeed! It's a parcel of religious tracks!"

"It ain't my fault," said little Jack, blubbering, and again having recourse to the old nightcap for want of a handkerchief. "It was Mrs. Stone's. She said it was for spiritous food, and I thought she meant gruel, with rum in it."

"Well, well," said the widow, forgetting, mother-like, her own troubles in the grief of her little one. "Don't cry. We shall, perhaps, have a pudding yet—who knows? Susan, maybe, will have better luck."

As she spoke, Susan stepped into the room, and walking gravely up to the table, began to search under her frock.

"Why, in Mercy's name!" exclaimed the alarmed widow,

"what is the girl fumbling at! You surely have not brought the eggs in your pocket?"

"I haven't brought the eggs in anything," said Susan, still groping among her petticoats.

"No! Then what *have* you brought?"

"A receipt for a plum-pudding."

"A receipt!" screamed the excited widow,—"a receipt! Why it's the only thing I don't want! I can write a receipt myself. Take a pound of suet, a pound of currants, a pound of plums—but how am I to take 'em? Where's my materials!"

"Here they are, mother," shouted the well-known voice of ragged Peter, as he bounded into the room and threw a good-looking bundle on the table. "There's the materials!"

"Then we're in luck after all!" said the widow, nervously tugging at the knots of the old handkerchief, which suddenly gave way and allowed the materials to unfold themselves.

"O Lord! O cri! O criminy!" ejaculated Peter and Charley, and little Jack, the girls using similar interjections of their own.

"Hold me!" cried the widow, "lay hold of me or I shall run away. I'm going off my head—I'm half crazy—take 'em out of my sight!—A pair of old red plushes!"

"I thought," whined Peter, "they was things from the pantry. But that comes of turning my back to the porter and exposing my rags. I wish, I do, that I was all front!"

"There's Dick," exclaimed Susan; "I hear his whistle in the distance. I wonder if he has got the saucepan!"

"Oh, of course we shall have that," said the widow, with great bitterness; repeated disappointments had brought her to the mood for what she called arranging Providence.—"Yes, we shall have the saucepan, no doubt, just because we've

nothing to put in it." She was wrong. In another minute Dick was standing amongst his brothers and sisters, but empty-handed.

"Why, bless the boy! He hasn't brought the saucepan after all!"

"No," said Dick,—"nor even a tin-pot. But I've brought this," and he chucked his present on the table.

"As I live!" cried the widow,—"it's an ivory totum!"

"Yes," said Dick. "It was given me by the young Brittons. They seemed to think, as we had no pudding, we should like to divert our hungers."

"Divert a fool's head!" cried the poor widow, throwing herself back in her chair, and laughing hysterically. "The world's gone mad!—the world's gone mad, and everybody is crazy! The more one wants anything, the more they give one something else—and the more one don't want anything, the more they force it upon you! Here am I, going to make a plum-pudding—or rather wanting to make one—and what have I got towards it!"

"A lump of suet!" muttered Charley.

"Yes, that's something," said the widow. "But what else—tell me what else have I got towards my pudding? Why, a square of yellow soap—a bundle of tracks—a written receipt—a pair of red plushes,—and a teetotum!"

The circle of children, down-hearted as they were, could not forbear a titter at the idea of the comical pudding to be made of such ingredients; but their mirth was speedily damped by the tears of their mother.

"It's all over," she said, "and Christmas must go by without its pudding! What will come of it, Lord knows! Once break through a religious rule, and who knows the consequence? There was your poor father and me: every wedding-day in our lives, as sure as it came round, we made

a point to have pickled streaky pork and pea-pudding, the same as at our nuptials; but one year, somehow or another, we missed—and in less than a week after he was called away."

"And why, mammy," asked little Jack, "why didn't you die too, then?"

The widow, doubtless, would have answered this heartless question; but unfortunately she was seized with such a violent fit of coughing as almost took away her breath. At last she recovered, rather suddenly, and assumed the attitude of a listener.

"Hush! there's somebody tapping at the door."

The children immediately rushed to the latch, and let in a tall, thin man, in black clothes and green spectacles, with an umbrella in one hand, and a red book in the other. A glance at the breast of his coat confirmed the widow's worst fears; an inkhorn with a pen in it was dangling from one of the button-holes.

"If it's rates or taxes," she said, "you must seize at once—for I haven't a farthing."

The man in black made no answer, but kept prying through his green glasses at the circle of young faces, and at length fixed upon Dick.

"Didn't I see you, my lad, looking in at the window of a cook-shop?"

"Yes," answered Dick, "and you asked me about the family, and if we wasn't in distress."

"Very good," said the man in black. "And you replied that you were in very deep distress indeed."

"Yes, for a sarcepan," said Dick.

"It was to boil our Christmas pudding in." said the widow. "But we haven't got one, sir, nor no hopes of one."

"Very good," said the man in black. "I am a Perambulating Member of the District Benevolent Visitation Society, and am come to relieve your wants."

"You are very good, I'm sure," said the widow, quite flustered by such moral plunges from hot to cold, and then to hot again. "As you say, sir, I have seen better days,"—though how or when the gentleman said so was known only to herself. "Yes, for twenty years I have been a householder, and up to this time have never missed celebrating my Christmas in a respectable way. And I do own it would go nigh to break my heart."

"Very good, very good," said the man in black, busily writing in the red book, from which he eventually tore out a leaf, that he folded up and presented to the widow.

"There's an order, ma'am, for what you want."

"The Lord in heaven bless you!" cried the widow, starting up from her chair, with a first impulse to throw herself on the good man's neck; and a second one, to go down on her knees to him; but which she checked just as the genuflection arrived at the proper point for a very profound curtsey.

"Oh, sir!—but I'm too full to speak. Yet, if the prayers of a widow and six fatherless children ——"

"Very good, very good, very good," said the man, in black, waving off the six ragged, dirty, grateful, fatherless children, who wanted to hug and kiss him—and shuffling as fast as he could to the door, through which he bolted more like a detected swindler than a professed Samaritan.

"Well, that comes of trusting to Providence," said the widow, quite forgetting a recent lapse, the least in the world, towards atheism. "Come, children, sing 'O be joyful,' for we have got our pudding at last."

The children needed no further hint; but at once joined

hands, and began dancing round the table, as if the grand object of their hopes had been already smoking in the middle—Dick whistling "Merrily danced the Quaker's Wife," as loud and fast as he could rattle it, whilst the mother ecstatically beat time with her head and foot. At last they were all out of breath.

"There, that will do," said the widow. "Now then, some of you put on your hats and bonnets to fetch the things; for, of course, it's an order on the baker and the grocer."

"It's an order," said Careful Susan, reading very deliberately the paper which she had taken from her mother's passive hand,—"an order for six yards of flannel."

"Flannin!"

"Yes, flannel."

The widow snatched the paper; glanced at it; threw it from her; and dropped into her chair; not as if for a temporary rest, but as though she would fain have sunk through the bottom of it, and right through the floor, and down through the foundation of the house, and six foot of earth beneath, for a quiet grave.

In a moment she had six comforters at her neck; not woollen ones, but quite as warm and more affectionate, though their loving assiduities were repelled.

"Don't hang on me—don't! And don't tell me to hope, for I won't, I can't, be consoled! So don't come nigh me—no, not even if you see me fainting away—for I'm grown desperate, like an over driv' beast, and don't know what I may commit!"

The panic-stricken children instinctively backed into a distant semicircle, and fixing their eyes on their parent, as if she had really been the enraged animal she had described, awaited in awful silence her next words. At last they came, in a fierce harsh voice.

"Wipe Jackey's nose."

A brother and sister on either hand of the little one immediately performed the desired office; and then trembling, waited the next command.

"Tear up that divilish paper!"

Susan immediately picked up the unfortunate order, but as she hesitated, with her usual prudence, to destroy what was equivalent to six yards of flannel, Dirty Polly snatched the paper from her, and tore it up as small as she could mince it.

"I have hoped as long as I could," cried the widow, suddenly starting to her feet, "but now I give up! When bad luck sets in that way, blow upon blow, it's for good. We shall never prosper again—never, never, never! We're a ruined family, root and branch—and if it was not for the sin, I'd wish nothing better at this blessed moment than to have you all six tied round my waist, enjoying a Serpentine death?"

At this horrible picture, which the speaker dramatised by frantically throwing up her arms, as at the fatal plunge, and then letting herself sink gradually, by a sort of curtsey, as if subsiding into the mud, the poor devoted children set up a general howl; and then broke into a series of sobbings and ejaculations, only checked by the opening of the door and the entrance of another stranger.

If the former visitor resembled a tax-gatherer, his successor hardly made a more favourable impression on the widow, from whom, had he asked the same question as the Baronet in the Poor Gentleman, "Do I look like a bailiff?" he would probably have received the same answer—"I don't know but you do." He had no red book in his hand, and no inkhorn at his button-hole; but he carried a very formidable bludgeon, and wore a very old wig, and a very broad-brimmed

hat, as much on one side as a yacht in a squall. Altogether there was such an air of disguise about him, that if not a bailiff, he was certainly, as the next best guess, a policeman in plain clothes.

"I believe, ma'am," said the stranger, "you have just had a visit from an agent of a Benevolent Society?"

"Yes, and be hanged to him!" thought the widow; "and perhaps you're another!" but she held her tongue. The stranger, therefore, repeated his question to Susan, as the eldest of the children, and was answered in the affirmative.

"I knew it," said the stranger. "And he asked if you were not in distress; and you said that you were, and he told you he was come to relieve it."

"Yes, with six yards ——" burst from several voices.

"Hush—hold your little tongues! I know it all—with an order for six yards of flannel—wasn't it so? Six yards of flannel for a Christmas pudding—ha! ha! ha!"

The children would have laughed, too, but they were afraid. The stranger had suddenly turned into a conjurer, who knew their thoughts and wishes.

"You are right, indeed, sir," said the widow. "He called himself by some hard name."

"Yes, an ambulating member," said the stranger, "of the District Visitation. I know them well. Six yards of flannel —just like them. That's their way. There was poor Biddy Hourigan, an Irish Catholic, ma'am—they visited her, too, and found her in deep distress, not about a pudding though, but because she had not a farthing in the world to get her husband out of purgatory. And how do you think, ma'am, they relieved a poor soul in purgatory? Why, with a bushel of coals!"

"Is it possible?" exclaimed the widow; adding, in the simplicity of her heart, "that perhaps it was in the winter?"

"No, ma'am, there's no winter *there*," said the stranger. "But to business. You have seen better days."

The poor widow cast a piteous glance at the bare walls and rickety furniture of her humble dwelling.

"You have been a housekeeper many years in this parish," continued the stranger, "and have been accustomed all your days to a plum-pudding at Christmas; and you cannot bear to go without it—hush! not a word!—I know it all by sympathy. I like myself to keep up old customs—better, most of them, than the new ones."

"They are, indeed," said the widow, shaking her head. "But if it is not a liberty, may I ask, sir, if you belong to any Society yourself?"

"Why, yes, ma'am," said the stranger, "In one sense I do—namely, the Universal Society of Human Nature. But if you mean such as the District Visitation, I do not. I tread in their steps, it is true, but it is to do what they leave undone. Their ambulators serve me for pointers to find my birds."

"And a noble sort of sporting, if ever there was one!" exclaimed the widow, with enthusiasm. "It's a thousand pities more rich people don't take out licences, and follow the same game."

"It is, indeed, a thousand pities, ma'am," said the stranger; "and a thousand shames to boot. In this motley world of ours, some people have their happiness cut thick, and buttered on both sides; and some have it thin, and no butter at all. As one of the former class, it's my duty to bestow some of my greasy superfluity on my poorer fellow creatures. But what are all those heterogeneous articles on the table, neither eatables nor drinkables—have you been visited, ma'am, by half a dozen Societies?"

The widow, with the help of her family, related their ad-

ventures in search of a pudding; at the end of which the stranger laughed so long and immoderately, and choked, and got so black in the face, that the children shrieked in chorus for fear he should go to heaven before his time. But ready-made angel as he was, heaven spared him a little longer by letting him come to; at which, however, instead of seeming overjoyed, he looked very grave, and shook his head, till the widow feared he had "bust a vessel."

"Too bad," he said, at last, "too bad of me to laugh at such distress. I must make amends on the spot—and the best way will be to make you all, if I can, as merry as myself. There, ma'am"—and he placed in the widow's hand a purse, through the green meshes of which she perceived the glitter of sovereigns, like gold fish among weeds. "Properly laid out, that money will purchase all the requisites for a Christmas plum-pudding, and some odd comforts and clothing besides. Hush—no words, I guess them all by sympathy! Only a shake of the hand all round, and a kiss from the little one. There! Be good boys and girls! God bless you all! Good-bye!"

The children watched the exit of the generous stranger till the last bit of him had disappeared, and then, as if "drowned in a dream," still continued gazing on the door.

"He was a real gentleman!" cried Dick.

"A saint! a saint!" exclaimed Mrs. Peck, "a real saint upon earth—and I took him for a bailiff! but no matter. He don't know it, that's one comfort; and if he did, such an angelical being would forgive it. But come, children, what are you all staring at? Why don't you huzza now, as you did afore, and whistle, and take hands, and dance round the table? Vent yourselves how you like—only don't quite pull the house down—for we've got a Christmas Pudding at last!"

[The Novel of "Our Family"—unfortunately only a fragment—was the latest literary undertaking of my father. Overflowing with fun and humour as they are, the majority of the chapters were dictated from what he knew was a bed of death. Cheerful to the last, he toiled on, as long as life remained, not so much for Fame, to ensure which he had already written more than enough, as to do what he could, while he could, for those dear ones whom he was so soon to leave.

In February, 1845, he wrote the Stanzas with which the volume practically closes,—the Appendix containing Notes, andpapers which should have been contained in previous volumes.—From that time until his death, except to write farewells to his friends, he laid his pen aside.]

OUR FAMILY.

A DOMESTIC NOVEL.

CHAPTER I.

WE ARE BORN.

THE clock struck seven——

But the clock was a story-teller; for the true time was One, as marked by the short hand on the dial. The truth was, our family clock—an old-fashioned machine, in a tall mahogany case, and surmounted by three golden balls, as if it had belonged to the Lombards—was apt to chime very capriciously.

However, it struck seven just as my father came down stairs from the bedroom, rubbing his hands, and whistling in a whisper, as his custom was when he was well pleased, and walking along the passage somewhat more than usual on his tiptoes, with a jaunty gait, he stepped into the sitting-room to communicate the good news. But there was nobody in the parlour except the little fairy-like gentleman, who walked jauntily to meet him, rubbing his hands, and silently whistling, in the old mirror,—a large circular one, presided over by some bronze bird, sacred perhaps to Æsculapius, and

therefore carrying a gilt bolus, attached by a chain to his beak.

From the parlour my father went to the surgery: but there was nobody there; so he repaired, perforce, for sympathy, into the kitchen, where he found the maid, Kezia, sitting on a wooden chair, backed close against the whitewashed wall, her hands clasped in her lap, and her apron thrown over her head, apparently asleep and snoring, but in reality praying half aloud.

"Well, Kizzy, it's all happily over."

Kezia jumped up on her legs, and having acknowledged, by a bob, her master's presence, inquired eagerly "which sects?"

"Doublets, Kizzy, doublets. A brace of boys!"

"What, twins! O, gimini!" exclaimed the overjoyed Kezia, her cheeks for a while glowing both of the same colour. "And all doing well, missis and babes?"

"Bravely—famously—mother and all!"

"The Lord preserve her!" said Kezia, with emphatic fervour—"the Lord preserve her and her progeny," pronouncing the last word so that it would have rhymed with mahogany.

"Progeny—with a soft *g*,"—muttered my father, who had once been a schoolmaster, and had acquired the habit of correcting "cakeology."

"Well, prodge, then," murmured Kezia, her cheeks again looking, but only for a moment, both of a colour. For, by a freak of nature, one side of her face, from her eye to the corner of her mouth, was blotched with what is called a claret-mark—a large irregular patch of deep crimson, which my father, fond of odd coincidences, declared was of the exact shape of *Florida* in the map. Be that as it might, her face, except when she blushed, exhibited a diversity of colour

quite allegorical, one side as sanguine as Hope, and the other as pallid as fear.

Now, a claret-mark is generally supposed to be "born with the individual;" whereas Kezia attributed her disfigurement to a juvenile face-ache, to relieve which, she had applied to the part a hot cabbage-leaf, but gathered unluckily from the red pickling brassica instead of the green one, and so by sleeping all night on it, her cheek had extracted the colour. An explanation, offered in perfect good faith; for Kezia had no personal vanity to propitiate. She had no more charms, she knew, than a cat—not any cat, but our own old shabby tabby, with her scrubby skin, a wall-eye, and a docked tail. But in moral Beauty—if ever there had been an annual Book of it—Kezia might have had her portrait at full length.

Her figure and face were of the commonest human clay, cast in the plainest mould. Her clumsy feet and legs, her coarse red arms and hands, and dumpy fingers, her ungainly trunk, and hard features, were admirably adapted for that rough drudgery to which she unsparingly devoted them, as if only fit to be scratched, chapped, burnt, sodden, sprained, frost-bitten, and stuck with splinters. And if sometimes her joints stiffened, her back ached, and her limbs flagged under the severity of her labours, was it not all for the good of that family to which she sacrificed herself with the feudal devotion of a Highlander to his clan? In short, she combined in one ungainly bundle of household virtues, all the best qualities of our domestic animals and beasts of burthen—loving and faithful as the dog, strong as a horse, patient as an ass, and temperate as a camel. At nineteen years of age she had engaged herself to my mother as Servant of All Work; and truly, from that hour, no kind of labour, hot or cold, wet or dry, clean or dirty, had she shunned: never

inquiring whether it belonged to her place, but toiling, a voluntary Slave, in all departments; nay, as if her daily work were not enough, sleep-walking by night into parlour and kitchen, to clean knives, wash-up crockery, dust chairs, or polish tables!

To female servants in general, and to those in particular who advertise for small families, where a footman is kept, the advent of two more children would have been an unwelcome event: perhaps equivalent to a warning. Not so with Kezia. Could one have looked through her homely bosom into her heart, or through her plain forehead into her brain, they would have been found rejoicing beforehand in the double, double toil and trouble of attending on the twins. My father's thoughts were turned in the same direction, but with a gravity that put an end to his sub-whistling, and led him, half in jest and half in earnest, to moralise aloud.

"Two at once, Kizzy, two at once—there will be sharp work for us all. Two to nurse—two to suckle—two to wean—two to vaccinate (he was sure not to forget that!)—two to put to their feet——"

"Bless them!" ejaculated Kezia.

"Two to cut their teeth—two to have measles, and hooping-cough——"

"Poor things!" murmured Kezia.

"Ay, and what's worse, two more backs to clothe; and two more bellies to fill—and I can't ride on two horses, and pay two visits at once."

"You must double your fees, master."

"No, no, Kizzy, that won't do. My patients grumble at them already."

"Then I'd double their physicking, and order two draughts, and two powders, and two boxes of pills, instead of one."

"But how will they like such double drugging, Kizzy—supposing that their constitutions are strong enough to stand it?"

Kezia was silent. She had thrown out her suggestion for the benefit of the family; and beyond that limited circle her mind never revolved. Her sympathies began, and, like Domestic Charity, ended at home. Society, and the large family of human kind in general, she left to shift for themselves.

The conversation having thus dropped, my father crept upstairs again, to see how matters were going on overhead, whilst the maid proceeded to answer a muffled knock at the front door, followed by an attempt to ring the night bell, but which had been completely dumb-founded by Kezia with paper and rag. The appellant was Mr. Postle, the medical assistant.

"A nice night for a ride through the Fens," grumbled the deputy-doctor, shaking himself in his great-coat, like a wet water-dog, before he followed the maid into the kitchen, where he seated himself in his steaming clothes before the fire.

"Mr. Postle!"

Mr. Postle looked up at the speaker, and saw her hard features convulsively struggling into what bore some distant resemblance to a smile.

"Mr. Postle!" and her voice broke into a sort of hysterical chuckle. "You don't ask the news?"

"What news?"

"What! Why, there's an increase of the family!" said Kezia, her face crimson on both sides with the domestic triumph. "We've got twins!"

"Humph!" grunted Mr. Postle. "Better one strong one, than two weakly ones."

"Weakly!" exclaimed Kezia; "why they're little Herculuses. Our babbies always are."

A suppressed laugh caused the assistant and Kezia to look round, and they beheld, close beside them, the nurse, Mrs. Prideaux. It was one of her peculiarities that she never shuffled about slipshod, or in creaking leather; but crept along, noiselessly as a ghost, in a pair of list mocassins: and thus, taking advantage of my father's visit to the bedchamber, she had descended for a little change to the kitchen.

A very superior woman was Mrs. Prideaux: quite the attendant for an aristocratic invalid, lying in down, beneath an embroidered quilt, and on a laced pillow. She was never seen in that slovenly deshabille, so characteristic of females of her profession; no, you never saw *her* in a slatternly coloured cotton gown, drawn up through the pocket-holes, and disclosing a greasy nankeen petticoat with ticking pockets—nor in a yellow nightcap tied over the head and under the chin with a blue-and-white bird's-eye handkerchief—looking like a hybrid between a washerwoman and a watchman. A pure white dimity robe tied with pale green ribands, was her undress. Her personal advantages were very great. Her figure was tall and genteel; her features were small and regular—so different to those dowdy Dodo-like creatures, bloated and ugly as sin, who are commonly called "nusses." Then, she did not take snuff; nor ever drank gin or rum, neat or diluted: a glass of foreign wine or liqueur, or brandy, if genuine Cognac, she would accept; but beer, never. No one ever heard her sniff, or saw her spit, or trim the candle-snuff with her fingers. And if ever she dozed in her chair, as nurses sometimes must, she never snored: but was lady-like even in her sleep. Her language was not only free from vulgarisms and provincialisms, but so

choice as to be generally described as "book English." You never heard Mrs. Prideaux blessing her stars, or invoking Goody Gracious, or asking Lawk to have mercy on her, or asseverating by Jingo. She would have died ere she would have complained of her lines, her rheumatix, her lumbargo, or the molligrubs. Such broad coarse words could never pass those thin compressed lips. But perhaps the best test of her refined phraseology was, that though the word was so current with mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, gossips, and servants of both sexes, that it rang in her ears, at least once in every five minutes, she never said—babby.

In nothing, however, was Mrs. Prideaux more distinguished from the sisterhood, than the tone of her manners: so affable, yet so dignified—and, above all, that serene self possession under any circumstances, supposed to accompany high breeding and noble birth. Thus, nobody ever saw her flustered, or non-plush'd, or at her wit's ends, or all in a twitter, or narvous, or ready to jump out of her skin; but always calm, cool, and correct. She hinted, indeed, that she was a reduced gentlewoman, deterred by an independent spirit from accepting the assistance of wealthy and titled connections. In short, she was a superior woman, so superior, that many a calculating visitor who would have tipped another nurse with a shilling, felt compelled to present a half-crown, if not a whole one, to Mrs. Prideaux, and even then with some anxiety as to her reception of the offering.

Such was the prepossessing person, whose presence notwithstanding was so unwelcome to the medical assistant, that her appearance in the kitchen seemed the signal for his departure. He rose up instantly from his chair, but halted a moment to ask Kezia if there had been any applications at the surgery in his absence.

"Yes, the boy from the curate's, for some more of the paradoxical lozenges: he says he can't preach without 'em."

"Paregorical. Well?"

"And Widow Wakeman with a complaint——"

"Ah! in her hip."

"No, in her mouth, that she have tried the Scouring Drops, and they won't clean marble."

"I should think not—they're for sheep. Well?"

"Only a prescription to make up. Pulv. something—aqua, something—summon'd, and cockleary."

"Anything else?"

"O yes, a message from the great house about the Brazen monkey."

"Curse the Brazil monkey!" and snatching up a candle, Mr. Postle yawned a good night apiece to the females, and with half-closed eyes stumbled off to bed.

"A quick-tempered person," observed Mrs. Prideaux, as soon as the subject of her comment was beyond earshot.

"Yes, rather caloric," she meant choleric. As an exception to her simple habits, Kezia was fond of hard words, perhaps because they were hard, just as she liked hard work.

"Well, Kezia, you observed the clock?"

"The clock, Ma'am?"

"Yes. The precise date of birth is of vast importance to human destiny."

"O, for their fortune-telling! I never thought of it—never!" And the shocked Kezia began to heap on herself, and her sieve of a head, the most bitter reproaches.

"No matter," said the nurse. "I *did* mark the time exactly." And as she spoke she drew from her bosom, and gazed at, a handsome enamelled watch, with a gold dial, and a hand that marked the seconds.

"You are aware that one of the twin infants was born before, and the other after, the hour of midnight?"

"No, really!" exclaimed Kezia, her dull eyes brightening at the prospect of a double festival. "Why then, there will be two celebrated birthdays!"

"The natal hour involves matters of much deeper importance than the keeping of birthdays," replied the nurse, with a startling solemnity of tone and manner. "Look here, Kezia," and returning the watch to her bosom, she drew forth a little blue morocco pocket-book, from which she extracted a paper inscribed with various signs and a diagram. "Do you know what this is?"

"I suppose," said Kezia, turning the paper upside down, after having looked at it in every other direction, "it is some of Harry O'Griffis's characters."

"Not precisely hieroglyphics," said the nurse. "It is a scheme for casting nativities. See, here are the Twelve Houses,—the first, the House of Life; the second, of Riches; the third, of Brethren; the fourth, of Parents; the fifth, of Children; the sixth, of Health; the seventh, of Marriage; the eighth, of Death; the ninth, of Religion; the tenth, of Dignities; the eleventh, of Friends; and, the twelfth, of Enemies."

"And in which of those houses were our two dear babbies born?" eagerly asked Kezia.

Mrs. Prideaux looked grave, sighed, and shook her head so ominously, that Kezia turned as pale as marble, her very claret-mark fading into a scarcely perceptible tinge of pink.

"Don't say it—don't say it!" she stammered, while the big tears gathered in her eyes: "What! cut off precockshiously like blighted spring buds!"

"I did not say death," replied the nurse. "But there are other malignant signs and sinister aspects, that foretell

misfortunes of another kind—for instance, poverty. But hush——" and she held up a warning forefinger whilst her voice subsided into a whisper.

"I hear your master. Leave your door ajar, and I will come to you presently in your own room." So saying, she rose and glided spectre-like from the kitchen—where she left Kezia staring through a haze, damp as a Scotch mist, at a vision of two little half-naked and half-famished babes turning away, loathingly, from a dose of parish gruel, administered by a pauper nurse, with a workhouse spoon.

CHAPTER II.

OUR HOROSCOPE.

A LONG hour had worn away, and still Kezia sate in her attic with the door ajar, anxiously expecting the promised visit from the mysterious nurse. Too excited to sleep, she had not undressed, but setting up a rushlight, seated herself on the bed, and gave full scope to her forboding fancies, till all the round bright spots, projected from the night-shade on the walls and ceiling, appeared like so many evil planets portending misfortunes to the new-born. From these reveries she was roused by a very low, but very audible whisper, every syllable clear and distinct as the sound of a bell.

"Whose room is that in front?"

"Mr. Postle's."

"Can he overhear us through the partition?"

"No, not a word."

"You are certain of it?"

"Yes, I have tried it."

"Very good." And Mrs. Prideaux having first carefully

closed the door, seated herself beside the other female on the bed. "I have left the mother and her lovely twins in a sound sleep."

"The little cherubs!" exclaimed Kezia. "And must they, will they, sink so low in the world, poor things! Are they unrevocably marked out for such unprosperous fortunes in life?"

"They must—they will—they are. Listen, Kezia? I have not been many days, not many hours under this roof; but my art tells me that the wolf already has more than looked in at the door—that the master of this house knows, by experience, the bitter trials of a poor professional man—the difficulties, the cruel difficulties, of one who has to keep up a respectable appearance with very limited means."

"The Lord knows we have!" exclaimed Kezia, quite thrown off her guard. "The struggles we have had to keep up our genteelity! The shifts we have been obligated to make—as well as our neighbours," she added hastily, and not without a twinge of mortification at having let down the family by her disclosures.

"I understand you," said Mrs. Prideaux, with a series of significant little nods. "Harassed, worried to death, for the means to meet the tradesmen's bills, or to take up overdue acceptances. I know it all. The best china, and linen parted with to help to make up a sum (Kezia uttered a low inward groan), the plate in pledge (another moan from Kezia), and the head of the family even obliged to absent himself, to avoid personal arrest."

"She is a witch, sure enough," said Kezia to herself. "She knows about the baileys."

"Yes—there have been sheriff's officers in this very house," continued the nurse, as if reading the secret thought of the other. "Nor are the circumstances of your master much

mended even at the present time,"—and she fixed her dark eyes on the pale blue ones, that seemed to contract under their gaze like the feline organ under excess of light—"at this moment, when there are not six bottles of what, by courtesy, we will call sherry, in his cellar, nor as many guineas in his bureau."

"Why, as to the wine," stammered Kezia, "we have had company lately, and I would not answer for a whole dozen; but as regards the pecuniary, I feel sure—I know—I'm positive there's nigh a score of golden guineas in the house, at this blessed moment—let alone the silver and the copper."

"Your own, perhaps?"

Kezia's face seemed suddenly suffused all over with claret, and felt as hot too as if the wine had been mulled, at being thus caught out in an equivocation, invented purely for the credit of the family.

"In a word," said the nurse, "your master is a needy man; and the addition of two children to his burthens will hardly improve his finances."

"But our practice may increase;" said Kezia. "We may have money left to us in a legacy—or win a grand prize in the lottery."

"I wish it was on the horoscope," said Mrs. Prideaux, looking up at the ceiling, as if appealing through it to the planetary bodies. "But the stars say otherwise. Rash speculations—heavy losses by bad debts—and a ruinous Chancery suit, as indicated by the presence of Saturn in the twelfth house."

"Satan!" ejaculated Kezia, with a visible shudder. "If *he's* in the house, there'll be Chancery suits no doubt, for he is in league, they say, with all the lawyers, from the judges down to the 'turneys."

"And, with litigation," said the nurse, "will come

rags and poverty, ay, down to the second and third generations."

"What, common begging—from door to door?"

"Alas, yes—mendicity and pauperism."

"Never!" said Kezia, with energy, starting up from the bed, and holding forth her clumsy coarse hands, with their ruddy digits, like two bunches of radishes to tempt a purchaser—"Never! whilst I can work with these ten fingers!"

"Of course not, my worthy creature, only don't be quite so vehement—of course not. And, as far as my own humble means extend, you shall not want my poor co-operation. I have already devoted my nursing fee and perquisites, whatever may be the amount, towards a scheme that will help to secure the little innocents from absolute want. There is a society, a sort of masonic society of benevolent individuals, privately established for the endowment of such unfortunate little mortals. For a small sum at the birth of a child, they undertake to pay him, after a certain age, a yearly annuity in proportion to the original deposit—a heavenly plan, devised by a few real practical Christians, who delight in doing good by stealth; and especially to such forlorn beings as are born under the influence of a malignant star. Now the year that threatens our dear darling twins is the seventh; a tender age, Kezia, to be left to the charity of the wide world!"

Poor Kezia turned as white as ashes; and for some minutes sate speechless, writhing her body and wringing her hands, as if to wring tears out of her finger ends. At last, in a faltering voice, she inquired how much seventeen guineas would grow into, per annum, in seven years.

"Why, let me see;" and Mrs. Prideaux began to calculate, by the help of a massive silver pencil-case and her tablets;

"seventeen guineas, for seven years, with interest—and interest upon interest—simple and compound—with the bonus, added by the society—why, it would positively be a little fortune—a good twenty pounds a year—enough at any rate to secure one, or even two persons, from absolute starvation.

Kezia made no reply, but darted off to a large iron-bound trunk, which she unlocked, and then drew from it a little round wooden box, the construction of which, every one who has swallowed Ching's worm medicine, so celebrated some thirty or forty years ago, will very readily remember. Unscrewing one half of this box with a shrill screeching sound, that jarred the nerves of Mrs. Prideaux, and set all her small white teeth on edge, Kezia poured into her own lap, from a compartment formerly occupied by oval white lozenges, ten full weight guineas of the coinage of King George the Third; then turning the box, and opening the opposite half, with a similar *shreek*, and a fresh shock to the nerves and teeth of the genteel nurse, she emptied from the division, once filled with oval brown lozenges, eight half guineas, and nine seven-shilling pieces, in all, seventeen guineas, the sum total of her hoarded savings since she had been at service.

"There, take them," she said, holding out her apron by the corners, with the precious glittering contents, towards the nurse.

"Bless you—bless you, for a true Samaritan!" replied Mrs. Prideaux, passing her hand lightly across her eyelashes —whilst something like a tear glistened upon one of her fingers, but the radiance came from a brilliant ring. "I will add this bauble to the stock," said the nurse, drawing it off, and throwing it into Kezia's apron. "But, my good girl, I am afraid you have contributed your all. You ought to

consider yourself a little—you may be ill—or out of place. At any rate, reserve a trifle against a rainy day."

"No, no—don't consider me—take it all—all, every penny of it," sobbed Kezia. "The poor dear innocents! they are as welcome to it as my own little ones—at least, if I had any."

"To be sure it is for *them*,—one, two, three," said the nurse, counting the pieces separately into a stout green silk purse with gilt rings: "seventeen guineas exactly. With my own poor mite, and the ring, say twenty, or five and twenty, to be invested for the dear twins in the Benevolent Endowment Society for Children born under Malignant Planets."

"Oh! I do wish," exclaimed Kezia, with the abruptness of a sudden inspiration, "I do wish I knew the fortune-teller that prophesies for Moore's Almanack!"

The nurse turned her keen dark eyes on the speaker, and for a minute regarded her, as if, in the popular phrase, she would have looked her through and through. But the scrutiny satisfied her; for she said in a calm tone, that the name in question was very well known, as Francis Moore, physician.

"But people say," objected Kezia, "that Francis Moore is only his alibi," she meant, alias.

"It is *not her* name," replied Mrs. Prideaux, with a marked staccato emphasis on the negative and the pronoun. "But that is a secret. And now, mark me, Kezia—not a syllable of this matter to any one, and least of all to the parents. The troubles we know are burthensome enough to bear, without an insight into futurity. And to foresee such a melancholy prospect predestined to the offspring of their own loins—"

"Oh! not for the world!" exclaimed Kezia, clasping her

hands together. "It would kill them outright—it would break both their hearts! As for me, it don't signify. I'm used to fretting. Oh! if you knew the wretched sleepless hours I've enjoyed, night after night, when master was in his commercial crisuses, with unaccommodating bills—he'd have had that money long and long ago, if I had had the courage to offer it to him, but he's as proud on some points as Lucifer. And, to be sure, we've not been reduced more than our betters, perhaps, at a chance time, when they could not get in their rents—or the steward absconded with them—or the stocks fell suddenly—or the bank was short of cash for the dividends, or the key of the bureau——"

She stopped short, for Mrs. Prideaux had vanished. So, after an exclamation of surprise, and a thoughtful turn or two up and down her chamber, the devoted Kezia threw herself on her knees beside the bed, and prayed fervently for her master, her mistress, and the dear little progeny, till in that devout posture she fell asleep.

CHAPTER III.

WE ARE NAMED.

It is assuredly a mercy for humankind that we are born into this world of folly as we are, mere purblind, sprawling, oysterly squabs, with no more *nous* than a polypus, instead of coming into it with our wits ready sharpened, and wide awake as young weasels! Above all, it is providential that we are so much more accessible to lachrymose than ludicrous impressions; more prone to tears, squallings, sobs, sighs, and blubberings, than to broad grins or crowings like chanticleer. For, while at a royal or imperial establishment, one

Fool has generally been deemed sufficient; at the court of a Lilliputian Infant or Infanta, it seems to be held indispensable that every person who enters the presence must play the zany or buffoon, and act, talk, sing, cut, and pull such antics, gibberish, nonsense, capers, and grimaces, that nine tenths of the breed of babies, if their fancies were at all ticklesome, must needs die of ruptured spleen, bursten blood-vessels, split sides, or shattered diaphragms. Yes, nine tenths of the species would go off in a guffaw, like the ancient who lost his breath in a cachinnation, at seeing an ass eating figs. For truly that donkey was nothing to the donkeys, nor his freak worth one of his figs, compared to the farcicalities exhibited by those he and she animals who congregate around the cots and cradles of the nursery.

Thus, had our own little vacant goggle eyes at all appreciated, or our ignorant sealed ears at all comprehended, the absurdities that were perpetrated, said, and sung, daily and hourly, before and around us, my Twin-Brother and myself must inevitably, in the first week, have choked in our pap, and died, strangled in convulsion fits of inextinguishable laughter, or perhaps jaw-locked by a collapse of the overstrained risible muscles.

It would have been quite enough to shatter the tender lungs and midriff of a precocious humourist, to have only seen that ungainly figure which so constantly hung over us, with that strange variegated face, grotesquely puckering, twisting, screwing its refractory features to produce such indescribable cacklings, chucklings, and chirrupings;—to have heard her drilling that impracticable peacocky voice, with its rebellious falsetto, and all its mazy wanderings, from nasal to guttural, from guttural to pectoral, and even to ventral, with all its involuntary quaverings, gugglings, and gratings,—into a soothing lullaby, or cradle hymn. It

must have asphyxiated an infant, with any turn for the comic, to have seen and heard that Iö-like creature with her pied red and white face, lowing—

"There's no ox a-near thy bed;"

or that astounding flourish of tune, accompanied by an appropriate brandishing of the mottled upper limbs, with which she warbled—

"'Tis thy Kissy sits beside thee,
And her harms shall be thy guard."

It was ten thousand mercies, I say, that the stolid gravity of babyhood was proof against such sounds and spectacles: not to forget that domestic conclave, with its notable debate as to the names to be given to us in our baptism.

"For my own part," said my mother, enthroned in a huge dimity-covered easy chair, "I should like some sort of names we are accustomed to couple together, so as to make them out for a pair of twins."

"Nothing more easy," said my father. "There's Castor and Pollux."

"Was Castor the inventor of castor-oil," inquired my mother, in the very simplicity of her heart.

"Why, not exactly," replied my father, suddenly rubbing his nose as if something had tickled him. "He was invented himself." An answer, by the way, which served my other parent as a riddle for the rest of the day.

"And what was their persuasion?"

"Heathen, of course."

"Then they shall never stand sponsors for children of mine," said my mother, whose religious sentiments were strictly orthodox. "But are there no other twin brothers celebrated in history?"

"Yes," replied my father. "Valentine and Orson."

"Why one—one—one of them," exclaimed Kezia, stuttering in her eagerness—"one of them was a savage, like Peter the Wild Boy, and sucked a she-bear!"

"Then *they* won't do," said my mother, in a tone of great decision.

"And Romulus and Remus are equally ineligible," said my father, "for they were suckled by a she-wolf."

"Bless me!" exclaimed my mother, lifting up her hands, "the ferocious beasts in those days must have been much tamer and gentler than in ours. I should be sorry to trust flesh and blood of mine to such succedaneums for wet-nurses."

"And what would be your choice, Kizzy?" inquired my father, turning towards the maid of all work, who, by way of employing both hands and feet, had volunteered to rock the cradle, whilst she worked at the duplicate baby-linen, so unexpectedly required.

"Why then," said Kezia, rising up to give more weight to the recommendation, "if that precious pair of infants was mine, I'd christen them Jachin and Boaz."

"The pillars of the temple,"—said my father. "But suppose, Kizzy, the boys chose to go into the army and navy?"

"They would fight none the worse," said Kezia, reddening, "for having Bible names!"

"Nor better," said my father, *sotto voce*. "And now, perhaps Mrs. Prideaux will favour us with her opinion?"

But the genteel nurse, with a sweet smile, and in her silvery voice, declined advising in such a delicate matter; only hinting, as regarded her private taste, that she preferred the select and euphonious, as a prefix. Her own son was named Algernon Marmaduke Prideaux.

"Perhaps," said my father, leaning his head thoughtfully

on one side, and scratching his ear, "perhaps Postle could suggest something. His head's like an Encyclopædia."

"He have," said Kezia, suspending for a moment her needlework and the rocking of the cradle. "He's for Demon and Pithy."

"For what!!!" exclaimed my mother,——

"Demon and Pithy."

"Phoo, phoo—Damon and Pythias," said my father, "famous for their friendship, like David and Jonathan, in the classical times."

"Then they're heathens, too," said my mother, "and won't do for godfathers to little Christians."

A dead pause ensued for some minutes, during which nothing was audible but my father's ghost of a whistle, and the gentle creak, creak of the wicker cradle. The expression of my mother's face, in the meantime, changed every moment for the worse; from puzzled to anxious, from anxious to fretful.

"Well, I do wish," she exclaimed at last, just at the tail of a long sigh, "I do wish, George, that you would think of some name for our twins. For, of course, you don't wish them to grow up anonymous like Tobit's dog!"

"Of course not," replied my father. "But I can hit on only one more suggestion. Supposing the infants to be remarkably fine ones——"

"And so they are!" put in Kezia.

"And of an uncommon size for twins——"

"They're perfect Herculuses," cried Kezia.

"What think you of Gog and Magog?"

"Fiddle and fiddlestick!" exclaimed my mother, in great indignation. "But I believe you would joke on your deathbed."

"Rabelais did," said my father. "But come," he added,

in his genuine serious voice, for he had two, a real and a sham Abraham one, "it is my decided opinion that we could not do better than to name the children after your brother. He is wealthy, and a bachelor; and it might be to the advantage of the boys to pay him the compliment."

"I have thought of that too," said my mother. "But my brother doesn't shorten well. Jinkins Rumbold is well enough; but you wouldn't like to hear me, when I wanted the children, calling for Jin and Rum."

"Pshaw!" said my father, "I am philosopher enough to bear that for the chance of a thumping legacy to our sons."

The genteel nurse, Mrs. Prideaux, backing this worldly policy of my father's with a few emphatic words, my mother concurred; and, accordingly, it was decidod that we should be called after Jinkins Rumbold; the Jinkins being assigned to my twin brother, the first-born, and the Rumbold to my "crying self."

It is usual, however, in dedicating works, whether of Art or Nature, in one or two volumes, to ask previously the permission of the dedicatee. To obtain this consent, it was necessary to write to our Godfather Elect: and accordingly my father retired to the parlour, and seated himself, on epistolary deeds intent, at the old escrutoire. But my parent was an indifferent letter-writer at the best; and the task was even more perplexing than such labours usually are. His brother-in-law was a formalist of the old school; an antiquarian in dress, speech, manners, sentiments, and prejudices, whom it would not be prudent to address in the current and familiar style of the day. The request, besides, involved delicate considerations, as difficult to touch safely, as impossible to avoid. In this extremity, after spoiling a dozen sheets of paper and as many pens, my father had recourse, as usual, to Mr. Postle who came, characteristically at his

summons, with a graduated glass in one hand, and a bottle of vitriolic acid in the other. It was indeed one of his merits, that he identified himself, soul and body, with his business; so much so, that he was reported to have gone to an evening party with his handkerchief scented with spirits of camphor.

"Mr. Postle," said my father, "I want your opinion on a new case. Suppose a rich old hunks of a bachelor uncle, whom you wished to stand godfather to your twins, what would be your mode of treatment, by way of application to him?"

The assistant, thus called in to consultation, at once addressed himself, seriously, to the consideration of the case. But in vain he stared at the Esculapian bronze bird with the gilt bolus suspended from its beak, and from the bird, at the framed sampler, and thence to the water-colour view of some landscape in Wales, and then at the stuffed woodpecker, and in turn at each of the black profiles that flanked the mirror. There was no inspiration in any of them. At last he spoke.

"If it's all the same to you, sir, I think, if we were to adjourn to the surgery, I could make up my mind on the subject. Like the authors, who write best, as I have heard, in their libraries, with their books about them, my ideas are always most confluent, when, in looking for them, my eyes rest on the drawers, and bottles, and gallipots. It's an idiosyncrasy, I believe, but so it is."

"So be it," said my father, gathering up his rough composing drafts, and hurrying, with Postle at his heels, into the surgery, where he established himself at the desk. The assistant in the meantime took a deliberate survey of all the wooden, earthenware, and glass repositories for drugs, acid, salt, bitter, or saccharine; liquid, solid, or in powder.

"Now then, Postle," said my father, "how would you set to work to ask a rich old curmudgeon to stand sponsor to your children?"

"Why, then, sir," replied Postle, "in the first place, I would disclaim all idea of drawing upon him"—(and he glanced at a great bottle apparently filled with green tinsel, but marked "cantharides"—"or of bleeding him. Next I would throw in gentle stimulants, such as an appeal to family pride, and reminding him of your matrimonial mixture. Then I would exhibit the babies—in as pleasant a vehicle as possible—flavoured, as it were, with cinnamon"—(he looked hard at a particular drawer)—"and scented with rose water. As sweet as honey"—(he got that hint from a large white jar)—"and as lively as leeches." (He owed that comparison to a great fact on the counter.)

"Very good," said my father.

"After that," continued Mr. Postle, "I would recommend change of air and exercise, namely, by coming down to the christening: with an unrestricted diet. I would also promise to make up a spare bed for him, according to the best prescriptions; with a draught of something comforting to be taken the last thing at night. Say, diluted alcohol, sweetened with sugar. Add a little essential oil of flummery; and in case of refusal, hint at a mortification."

"Capital!—Excellent!" exclaimed my father. And on this medical model he actually constructed a letter, before dinner time, which might otherwise have puzzled him for a week!

CHAPTER IV.

THE bed in the spare bed-room had been aired for my father: who, between his attendance on my mother and another lady in the same predicament, had never been out of his clothes for three successive nights. But the time for repose had arrived at last; he undressed hastily, and was standing in his night-gown and night-cap, his hand, with the extinguisher just hovering over the candle, when he heard, or thought he heard, his name called from without. He stopped his hand and listened—not a sound. It had been only the moaning of the wind, or the creaking of the great poplar at the end of the house; and the hollow cone was again descending over the flame when his name was shouted out in a peremptory tone by somebody close under the window. There could be no mistake. With a deep sigh he put down the extinguisher—opened the casement, and put forth his head. Through the gloom he could just perceive the dark figure of a man on horseback.

"Who is there?"

"Why the devil," grumbled the fellow, "have you muffled the night-bell? I've rung a dozen times."

"Why?"—replied my father—"why, because my mistress is confined."

"I wish mine was," growled the man, "in a madhouse. You're wanted."

"To-night?"

"Yes: I'm sent express for you. You're to come directly."

"Where?"

"At the Great House, to be sure."

"Well, I'll come—or, at any rate, Mr. Postle ——"

"No—you must come yourself."

My father groaned in spirit, and shuddered as if suddenly struck to the lungs by the night-air.

"Who is ill?" he asked; "is it Prince George?"

"No—it's the little"—the rest was lost in the sound of the horse's heels as the messenger turned and rode off.

My father closed the casement with a slam that nearly broke the jingling glass; and for some minutes stood ruefully looking from the candle to the bed, and from the bed to the chair with his clothes. But there was no remedy; with his rapidly increasing family he could not afford to slight a patient at the Great House. So he plucked off his nightcap, threw it on the floor, and with both hands harrowed and raked at his hair, till every drowsy organ under it was thoroughly wakened up; then he dressed hastily, crept down stairs, wisped a bandanna round his throat, struggled into his great coat, thrust on his worst hat, and, pocketing the door-key, stepped forth into the dark, damp, chill air. He thought he never felt so uncomfortable a night in his life, or encountered worse weather; but he thought a mistake. He had met with inferior qualities by fifty degrees. However, there were disagreeables enough, wind and fog, and his road lay for half a mile on the border of a Lincolnshire river, and through a dreary neighbourhood,—for, out of Holland or Flanders, there was not such another village, so low and flat, with so much water, running and stagnant, in canals and ditches, amidst swampy fields growing the plant cannabis, or hemp; or with so many windmills, and bulrushes, and long rows of stunted willows, relieved here and there by an aspen, that seemed shivering with the ague. On he went, yawning and stumbling, past the lock, and over the bridge, and along by the row of low cottages, all as dark as death except one, and that was as dark as death too, in spite of its solitary bright window. For the doctor stopped as he went by to

peep in at the narrow panes, and saw one of those sights of misery that the eye of Providence, a parish doctor, a clergyman occasionally, and a parliamentary commissioner still more rarely, have to look upon. On the bed—if bed it might be called, for it was a mere heap of straw, matting, rushes, and rags, covered by a tattered rug—sat the mother, rocking herself to and fro, over the dead child, wasted to a skeleton, that was lying stark across her lap. Beside her sat her husband, staring steadfastly, stupid with grief, at the flame of the rushlight, his hollow cheeks showing yellow, even by the candle light, from recent jaundice. Neither moved their lips. On the floor lay an empty phial, with the untasted medicine beside it in a broken tea-cup; there was a little green rush basket near the mother's feet, with a few faded butter-cups—the last toys. My father saw no more, for the light that had been flickering suddenly went out, and added Darkness to Sorrow and Silence.

In spite of his medical acquaintance with similar scenes of wretchedness, he was shocked at this startling increase of desolation; and for a moment was tempted to step in and offer a few words of consolation to the afflicted couple. But before his hand touched the latch, reflection reminded him from his experience, how inefficacious such verbal comfort had ever been with the poor, except from sympathisers of their own condition. In the emphatic words of one of his pauper patients, "When a poor man or woman, as low down in life as myself, talks to me about heaven above, it sounds as sweet-like as a promise of going back some day to my birth-place, and my father's house, the home of my childhood; but when rich people speak to me of heaven, it sounds like saying, now you're old and worn out, and sick, and past work, and come to rags, and beggary, and starvation, there's heaven for you—just as they say to one, at the

last pinch of poverty—by way of comforting—there's the parish."

So my father sighed and walked on: those two wretched, sickly, sorrow-stricken faces, and the dead one, seeming to flash fitfully upon him out of the darkness, as they had appeared and vanished again by the light of the flickering candle. And with this picture of human misery in his mind's eye, he arrived at the Great House: and still carrying the dolorous images on his retina, across the marble hall, and up the painted staircase, and through the handsome antechamber, stepped, with it still vivid, into the luxurious drawing-room, that presented a new and very different scene of distress.

On her knees, beside the superb sofa, was the weeping lady of the mansion, bending over the little creature that lay shivering on the chintz cushion, with its arms hugging its own diminutive body, and the knees drawn up to the chest. Its dark almond-shaped eyes rolled restlessly to and fro: its tiny mouth seemed puckered up by suffering, and its cheeks and forehead were deeply wrinkled, as if by premature old age. The nurse, a young woman, was in attendance, so exhausted by watching that she was dozing on her feet.

As my father advanced into the room, he could distinguish the low moaning of the afflicted lady, intermixed with all those fond doting epithets which a devoted mother lavishes on her sick child. The moment she became aware of his presence she sprang up, with a slight hysterical shriek, and running to meet him, exclaimed,

"Oh! doctor, I am so glad you are come! I have been in agonies! My poor dear darling, Florio, is ill—going—dying;" and she sobbed aloud, and buried her face in her handkerchief.

My father hastily stepped past her, to the sofa, to look at

the patient: and, at the risk of bursting, suppressed an oath that tingled at the very tip of his tongue. A single glance had filled up the hiatus in the groom's communication—the sufferer was a little Brazilian monkey.

My father's surprise was equal to his disgust, aggravated as it was by a vivid remembrance of the domestic distress he had so recently witnessed through the cottage window. His head filled with that human bereavement, he had totally forgotten the circumstance that once before he had been summoned to the Great House on a similar errand—to prescribe for a sick lap-dog, named after an illustrious personage, at that time very popular, as Prince George. But the whispers of Prudence stifled the promptings of Indignation, reminding him, just in time, that he was a poor country practitioner, the father, within the last eight-and-forty hours, of a pair of twins. Accordingly he proceeded with all gravity to feel the pulse and examine the skin of the dwarf animal; laying his hand on the chest to estimate the action of the heart; and even ascertaining, at the expense of a small bite, the state of the tongue.

The weeping lady in the meantime looked on with intense anxiety, uttering incoherent ejaculations, and putting questions with unanswerable rapidity. "Oh, the darling!—my precious pet!—is he hot—is he feverish? My little beauty! —Isn't he very, very ill? He don't eat, doctor—he don't drink—he don't sleep—he don't do anything—poor dear! Look how he shivers! Can you—can you—do anything for him—my little love of loves! If he dies I shall go distracted—I know I shall—but you'll save him—you will, won't you? Oh do, do, do prescribe—there's a dear good doctor. What *do* you think of him—my suffering sweet one —tell me, tell me, pray tell me—let me know the worst—but don't say he'll die! He'll get over it, won't he—with a

strong constitution?—say it's a strong constitution. Oh, mercy! look how he twists about!—my own, poor, dear, darling little Flora!"

My father, during this farrago, felt horribly vexed and annoyed, and even looked so in spite of himself: but the contrast was too great between the silent, still, deep, sorrow—still waters are deep—for a lost child, and these garrulous lamentations over a sick brute. But the hard, cold, severe expression of his face gradually thawed into a milder one, as the idea dawned upon him of a mode of extracting good out of evil, which he immediately began to put in practice.

"This little animal,"—he intended to have said my little patient, but it stuck in his throat—"this little animal has no disease at present, whatever affection may hereafter be established, unless taken in time. It is suffering solely from cold and change of climate. The habitat of the species is the Brazils; and he misses the heat of a tropical sun."

"Of course he does—poor thing!" exclaimed the lady. "But it is not my fault—I thought the Brazils were in France. He shall have a fire in his bed-room."

"It will do no harm, Madam," said the Doctor. "But he would derive infinitely more benefit from animal heat—the warmth of the human body."

"He shall sleep with Cradock!" exclaimed the lady, looking towards the drowsy young woman, who bit her lips and pouted: and mind, Cradock, you cuddle him."

"I should rather recommend, Madam," said my father, "a much younger bed-fellow. There is something in the natural glow of a young child peculiarly restorative to the elderly or infirm, who suffer from a defect of the animal warmth—a fact well known to the faculty: and some aged persons even are selfish enough to sleep with their grandchildren on that very account. I say selfish, for the benefit

they derive is at the expense of the juvenile constitution, which suffers in proportion."

"But where is one to get a child for him?" inquired the lady, perfectly willing to sacrifice the health of a human little one to that of her pet brute.

"I think I can manage it, Madam," said my father, "amongst my pauper patients with large families. Indeed I have a little girl in my eye."

"Can she come to-night?" asked the lady.

"I fear not, said my father. "But to-morrow, Ma'am, as early as you please."

"Then for to-night, poor dear, he must make shift with Cradock," said the lady, "with a good tropical fire in the room, and heaps of warm blankets."

(Poor Cradock looked hot at the very thought of it.)

"And about his diet?" asked the lady—"it's heart-breaking to see his appetite is so delicate. He don't eat for days together."

"Perhaps he will eat," said my father, "for monkeys, you know, Madam, are very imitative, when the child sets him the example."

"I'll stuff her!" said the lady.

"It can do her no harm," said my father; "on the contrary, good living will tend to keep up her temperature. And as her animal warmth is the desideratum, she must be carefully guarded against any chill."

"I'll clothe her with warm things," said the lady, "from head to foot."

"And make her take exercise, Madam," added my father: "exercise in the open air, in fine weather, to promote the circulation of the blood, and a fine glow on the skin."

"Cradock shall play with her in the garden," said the lady; "they shall both have skipping-ropes."

"I can think of nothing else," said my father; "and if such careful treatment and tender nursing will not cure and preserve her, I do not know what will."

"Oh, it must, it will, it shall cure her, the darling precious!" exclaimed the delighted lady, clapping her jewelled hands. "What a nice clever doctor you are! A hundred, thousand, million thanks! I can never, never, never, repay you; but, in the meantime, accept a slight token of my gratitude," and she thrust her purse into my father's hand.

For an instant he hesitated; but, on second thoughts, he pocketed her bounty, and with due thanks took his leave. "After all," he thought, as he stepped through the antechamber, "I am glad I was called in. The monkey may live or die; but, at any rate, poor little Betty Hopkins is provided for one while with a roof over her, and food, and raiment."

The night was finer; the weather, as he stepped into it, was wonderfully improved: at least he thought so, which was the same thing. With a light brisk step he walked homewards, whistling much above his usual pitch, till he came abreast of the cottage of mourning. There he stopped, and his sibilation sank into silence, as the three melancholy faces—the yellow, the pale, and the little white one—again flashed on his memory. Then came the faces of his own twin children, but fainter, and soon vanishing. His hand groped warily for the latch, his thumb stealthily pressed it down; the door was softly pushed a little ajar, and the next instant something fell inside with a chinking sound on the cottage floor. The door silently closed again, the latch quietly sank into the catch; and my father set off again, walking twice as fast, and whistling thrice as loud as before. A happy man was he, for all his poverty, as he let himself in with the house key, to his own home, and remembered that

he had under its roof two living children, instead of one dead one. Quickly, quickly he undressed, and got into bed: and, oh! how soundly he slept, and how richly he deserved to sleep so, with that delicious dream that visited him in his slumbers, and gave him a foretaste of the joys of heaven!

CHAPTER V.

A DILEMMA.

THE sun was high in heaven ere my father awoke the next morning, roused from his Elysian dreams by the swallows which first twittered at the eaves above the window, and then, after wheeling round the gable, went skimming along the surface of the glittering river in front of the house: contriving, temperate creatures though they be, to *moisten their clay* in the passage. The good Doctor sprang from his bed, threw open his casement, and looking cheerfully out into the fresh bright air, began whistling, in his old quiet way, the White Cockade. In the language of the professional bulletins, he had passed a good night: whereas my mother's had been a bad one. On paying his morning visit, he found her weak and languid: her face faded to a dull white, that, with its solid settled gravity, reminded him of cold suet dumpling.

"Your mistress seems poorly this morning," said my father, addressing himself to Mrs. Prideaux, who had just entered the bedroom, dressed in a morning costume of peculiar neatness.

"I have certainly had the pleasure of seeing your lady look better," answered the nurse, "but she has been watchful, and giving way to mental solicitude."

"Solicitude!—about what?"

"It's about the christening," said my mother, with a sigh of exhaustion. "I have hardly slept a wink all night for thinking of it—and cannot yet make up my mind."

"As to what?"

"Why, whether we should have two godfathers, or four."

"Four godfathers!"

"Yes—four," said my mother. "Kezia says, as there are twins to baptize, there must be a double set of sponsors. And certainly, according to the Book of Common Prayer, she is right. Here it is—" and she pulled the authority from under her pillow—"The Ministration of Public Baptism of Infants, to be used in the Church. *And note, that there shall be for every male child to be baptized two godfathers* and one godmother."

"Humph!" said my father. "The rule seems plain enough. But will not the same pair of sponsors serve over again for the second child?"

"That is the very point," said my mother. "I have been turning it over and over, all night long, till my poor head is in a whirl with it; but am none the nearer. What is your impression about it?"

"The duties of a godfather are rather serious," said my father, "and if duly fulfilled would be somewhat onerous. But, as they are commonly performed, or rather compounded for, by some trifling gift, a spoon, a mug, or a coral——"

"And some godfathers," exclaimed my mother, "neglect even that! There was old Mackworth, who stood for little Tomkins, and, rich as he is, never gave his godson so much as a salt spoon!"

"Such being the case," said my father, putting on his gravest face, "I really think that a couple of able-bodied

men might stand sponsors, not merely for two babies, but for a whole regiment of infantry."

"It depends on the canons," said my mother, unconsciously supplying the infantry of my father's equivoque with appropriate artillery.

"On the what?"

"On the canons of the church," said my mother; "and I do wish that in your rounds you would look in on the Curate and obtain his dictum on the subject."

"Perhaps Mrs. Prideaux can enlighten us," said my father, turning towards that ladylike personage, who was hushing my brother on her lap, with a lullaby refined enough to have been of her own composition.

"No, I have asked Mrs. Prideaux," interposed my mother; "but she has never nursed twins before, she says, and therefore cannot furnish a precedent."

"And if the Curate has never baptized twins before," said my father, "he will be in the same predicament."

"Of course he will," said my mother, looking as blank as if the clergyman in question had already declared himself at the supposed nonplus. "I'm quite troubled about it, and have been sleepless all night. It would break my heart to find hereafter that the dear infants had only been half Christianized through any departure from the orthodox rules."

"I'll tell you what," said my father, starting up from a brief reverie, during which he had assumed his usual air and attitude, at the consideration of an intricate case. I'll ask Postle."

"Kezia has asked him," said my mother.

"Well?"

"Why, he said that two godfathers are the proper dose for a male child, but whether it ought to be repeated for

twins, was more than he could say, and advised a consulting clergyman to be called in."

"Precisely so—it is a clerical case."

"For my part," continued my mother, "I am at my wit's ends about it; for four sponsors, if there must be four, are not to be looked up in a hurry——"

"There's no need of four," exclaimed a voice, and in another moment the face of Kezia became visible between the foot-curtains of the bed, her claret-mark mulled by heat and haste to a rich purple, and the other cheek vying with it in colour through triumph and excitement. "There's no need for four! Two godfathers will be enough for both twins; here it is under the Church's own hand;" and she held out an open letter to her mistress.

That invaluable Kezia! At the first hint of the dilemma, from my mother—having previously teased, and tried to unpick the difficulty, in her own mind, she had carried it down stairs, to where all mysteries and doubts were taken for analysis and solution—the surgery. But Mr. Postle, as already stated, was unable to decide the question. In this extremity, it occurred to her that there was a certain channel, through which she might obtain the requisite information: one Mrs. Yardly, whose husband, the parish clerk, would be as competent an authority as to the baptismal ceremonial as the curate himself. The acquaintance, it was true, was a very slight one: but where the good of the family was concerned, the faithful maid of all work was accustomed to get over far more formidable fences. Accordingly she at once composed and dispatched a missive, of which the following is a correct copy, to the Amen Corner of our village.

"Dear Maddam

"Hopping you will xcuse the Libberty from allmost a purfect Strainger havin but wunce xchanged speach with you in the Surgary, about

a Pot of Lennitive Electricity. But our hole Fammily being uncommon anxous respectin the Cristnin of Hinfants. About witch we are all in a Parradox thro havin Twinns. The sweatest, finest thrivingest littel Cherrubs you ever saw. As lick as too pees And a purfect plesure to nus only raythor hoarse and roopy with singin dubblikit lullabis and so much Cradle Him. Not to menshun a xtra sett of Babby linnin to be made at a short notis for the Supper nummery And all the housold wurk besides. But its unpossible to help slavin wuns self to Deth for such a pare of dear luvable littel hinnocents, and I allmost wish I was ded to be a Gardian Angle for their sacks being purfectly misrable wen I think wat Croops and Convulshuns and Blites beset such young toothless Buds. And half crazy besides with divided oppinions between Small Pock and Cow Pock witch by report runs sum times into horns and Hoofs. Lord preserve the dear littel Soles from such a trans moggrificashun. But lettin alone Waxynation our present hobject bein to make them Hares of Grace. And as such how menny must stand Sponsers for them at the Fount! The Prayer Book says two god fathers for evvery Mail but the Pint is wether the same two cannot anser or not for boath. As yet only two have been providid namely their unkel Mr. Rumbold the Dry Salter and a Mister Sumboddy, a Proxy in Docters Commons. So that if so be Fore Fathers is necessary for Twinns we shall be at a Non Plush. The nus Mrs. Priddo never havin nust Twinns afore cant find a President. And Mr. Postle say it is out of his line of practis. But your Husbund Mister Y bein a clisiasticle Caracter of course knows wat is propper and ortherdoxical and an erly Line from ether him or you to that effect would grately obleege and releave all our minds. For as you may supose we are anxous for the dear Hinfants to have a reglar Babe teasing. And shud be shockt arterwards to find they had been skrimpt in their Spirritual rites. Witch is a matter in witch wun would prefer their Babbies to be raythor over then under dun. Bless, bless, their preshus littel harts. With witch I remane dear Maddam

"Yours &c.

KEZIA JENKS."

The answer to this epistle had just arrived; and after a hasty perusal by Kezia, was thrust open into her mistress's hand.

"Here, take it George," said my mother, "and read it aloud."

My father took the document, and began to read,—the owner of the letter lending her ears as intently, as if she learned the sense of the writing for the first time.

"Madam,

"In reply to your epistolary favour to my Wife beg to say you are quite wellcome gratis to any experience or information in my Power, parochial, ecclesiastical, or scholastic—Copies of Births, Deaths, or Marriage Certificates excepted, and searching the Register, which is charged for according to time and trouble.

"As regards the Sacrament of Baptism, the quotation from the Prayer Book is ceremoniously correct. Whereby, according to the Rule of Three, if one Male Infant require two Godfathers how many will two require? Answer, Four. But in Practice two are religiously sufficient for twin juveniles. Our fees in any case being the same. Not that the Church object to the full sponsorial complement if parental parties think proper to indulge in the same; whether for the sake of a greater Shew, or with a view to the multiplication of customary presents. Exempli Gratia, Mrs. Fordige with the extraordinary number of Four Twin Sons at a Birth, who were named after the Holy Evangelists, videlicet, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, when it was thought proper to have the full number of Godfathers, $4 \times 2 = 8$, and which I well remember walking up the aisle two and two, with Nosegays, like the team of a Stage Waggon. As was considered an interesting spectacle, especially by the Female part of the congregation. And profitable, besides, to parents, the eight Godfathers having agreed amongst themselves, and the four Godmothers likewise—Sum Total, twelve—to present Plate of the same pattern.

"In conclusion, my matrimonial Partner desires her compliments, & trusts to be excused answering the domestic details in your Letter for the present, hoping shortly to enjoy the pleasure of a Call, and to enter into the dear little innocents in person.

"I am, Madam,

"Your very humble Servant,

REUBEN YARDLEY, P.C.

"There!" said my father, returning the letter to Kezia; and then gaily addressing my mother, "Our perplexities are at an end! We may drive our christening coach with a pair of godfathers, or four in hand, at our own option. For which do you vote?"

"O, for only a pair, of course," replied my mother. "The four would be so hard to collect," she added in a tone which showed that she lamented the difficulty. She was proud of her twins, and would have liked to have seen them attended up the church aisle by a double set of sponsors, walking two

and two, with nosegays, and forming, as the learned clerk said, an interesting spectacle to the female spectators. For a minute or so, closing her eyes, she had even enjoyed, in a day-dream, a sort of rehearsal of such a procession: but there were too many obstacles in the way of its realisation; and she reluctantly gave up the scheme.

"That's settled, then!" exclaimed my father, rubbing his hands together in a most high and palmy state of satisfaction.

"Not quite," said my other parent; who from stewing had only subsided into a simmering. "There's the godmother. I have gone through every female name in the place, without hitting on any body likely to undertake the office."

"Phoo, phoo, it's a mere form."

"I beg your pardon," said my mother rather hastily. "Some persons think it a very responsible office, and refuse to be godmothers at all on that account. Others, again, profess a deep sense of its duties, and insist on acting up to the character."

"And is there any harm in that?" asked my father.

"There might be a world of trouble and annoyance in it," said my mother. "There's Mrs. Pritchard, whom I sounded on the subject, when she called yesterday. "I'm agreeable to stand," said she, "if I'm asked, but, mind, I shall stand on conscientious grounds. I'm not going to be a nominal godmother, like some people:—not a mere automaton, or a figure in wax-work. If I become one of their religious sureties, I'll act up to it, and do my duty as regards their spiritual bringing up," which is all very well, but might be made a pretext, you know, for interfering in the children's education, and every-thing."

"No doubt of it," said my father. "And from the perseverance with which Mrs. Pritchard meddles in the temporal

concerns of her neighbours, she would unquestionably be a rank nuisance where she had any pretence for busying herself with their spiritual ones. But there's Mrs. Hewley."

"She's in favour of Adult Baptism," replied my mother.

"Old Mrs. Trent?"

"She's for total immersion, or dipping in running streams."

"Mrs. Cobley, then?"

"Why, she's a Papist!"

Poor Kezia! Her variegated York and Lancaster face had undergone, during the discussion, a dozen changes—from red and white to all red, and then back again,—her lips twitching, her brows knitting, her eyes twinkling and moistening. What would she not have given to have been in a station that would have entitled her to volunteer the god-mothering of those evangelical twin babes—to have undertaken the care of their precious little souls, as well as of their dear little bodies!—to have stood for them at the font, as well as at the fire, the dresser, the tub, and the ironing-board—slaving for their spiritual welfare as well as their temporal comfort! How heartily she would have pledged herself to teach them the Creed and the Commandments, and the Catechism, in the vulgar tongue, and "all that a Christian ought to know," if she learned some branches of education herself for the purpose! But she had, alas! no chance of enjoying such drudgery.

"There's Mrs. Spencer," suggested my father.

"She's confined," said my mother.

"Well, well," said my father, smiling, "if it comes to the worst, there's the pew-opener."

"The Lord forbid!" exclaimed Kezia, lifting up her hands and her eyes at the proposition. "What, Mrs. Pegge! Why she stands for all the naturalized children in the parish."

"As mine are, I hope," said my father, with due gravity.

Kezia turned indignantly away: she felt sure that her master must be joking, but the subject was too serious for such treatment. What,—those beautiful twin babes—both in one cradle—both on one pillow—both under one blanket! "Bless them," she ejaculated aloud, "bless them, bless them, the dear little cherubims—I've boil'd their tops and bottoms!"

The last announcement was aimed at the nurse, but it evidently hit my father also, and in some ticklesome place, for he rubbed his nose as smartly as if a fly had settled on it, and then setting up his whisper of a whistle, stepped briskly out of the bedchamber and down the stairs into the surgery. Why he stopped his music, to laugh out at about the middle of the flight, was known only to himself.

CHAPTER VI.

CATECHISM JACK.

My father was the parish doctor; and when he entered the surgery, Mr. Postle was making up a parish prescription. A poor, shabbily-dressed woman was waiting for the medicine, and a tall, foolish-looking lad was waiting for the poor woman. She was a widow, as it is called, without incumbrance, and had a cottage and some small means of her own, which she eked out, with the stipend allowed to her by the overseers for taking charge of some infirm or imbecile pauper. The half-witted boy was her present ward.

"It's for Jacobs," said the woman, as my father glanced over the shoulder of his assistant at the prescription. "He gets wus and wus."

"Of course he does," said my father; "and will, whilst he takes those opium pills."

"So I tell him," said the woman—"with the ague, and in a flat marshy country like this, with water enough about to give any one the hydraulics."

"Hydroptics."

"Well—droptics. You want stimulusess, says I, and not nar—nar—cis— "

"Narcotics."

"Well—cotics. But the poor people all take it. If it's their last penny, it goes for a pennorth of opie, as they call it, at Doctor Shackle's."

"I wonder he sells it," said my father.

"And asking your pardon, doctor," said the woman, "I wonder you don't. They say he makes a mint of money by it."

"Never!" said my father, with unusual emphasis—"never if I want a shilling!"

"Talking of money," said the woman, "there's a report about goolden guineas, chucked last night by nobody knows who—for it was done in the dark—into the Hobbes's cottage. They have just lost their only child, you know."

The assistant suddenly checked the pestle with which he was pounding, and looked inquisitively at his principal, who fixed his eyes on the idiot boy.

"Well, my lad, and who are you?" inquired my father. "What's your name?"

"M. or N.," answered the boy, slowly dragging the wet forefinger, which he had withdrawn from his mouth, with a long snail-like trail along the counter.

"Fiddlesticks," exclaimed the woman, giving her charge a good shaking by the shoulder. "You've got another name besides that."

"Yes," drawled the boy, "some call me Catechism Jack."

"Ah!—that's an odd name!" said my father. "Who gave it you!"

"My godfathers and godmothers in my baptism," said Jack.

"No such thing, sir," said the woman; "it was the idle boys of the village, because he was always repeating on it; and, indeed, poor fellow, he can repeat nothing else."

"Then how did he get that?"

"Why you see, sir," said the woman, "between ourselves it was all along of his godmother."

"Ah!—indeed!" exclaimed my father, pricking up his ears at such an appendix to the recent discussion in the bedroom. "His godmother, eh?"

"Yes, Mrs. Tozer as was, for she's dead now, as well as his own mother; and that's how he came into my care. His mother went first, while he was in petticoats, and so Mrs. Tozer took charge of him, and sent him to the infant day-school. She was a very strict woman in her religious principles, and so was the schoolmistress; and both made it a great pint for the children to be taught accordingly, which they was. Well, one day there they were, all in the school-room up one pair, and little Jack amongst the rest, the last of the row, a-setting on the very end of a long form close to the open door. Well, by-and-by the children were all called up to say Catechism; so up they all got at once, except Jack, who had been playing instead of getting his task by rote, which made him backwarder to rise than the rest,—when, lo! and behold! up tilts the form, like a rearing horse, and pitches Jack, heels over head, through the door and down the whole stone flight, where he was picked up at the bottom perfectly unsensible."

"Ah!—with a concussion of the brain," said my father.

"A contusion of the occiput," added Mr. Postle; "the spinal vertebræ excoriated, of course, and bruises on both patellæ."

"I don't know about that," said the woman, "but he had a lump on the back of his head as big as an egg; the nubbles of his back were rubbed raw, and his two kneepans were as black as a coal. It was thought, too, that his intellex were shook up into a muddle."

"No doubt of it," said my father.

"Well, to go on with Jack. At long and at last he came to, sore enough and smarting, as you may suppose, for he had been carried home to his godmother, and she had rubbed his wounds with spirits and salt, which had got into the cuts. And now Jack, says she, mark my words, and let them be a warning. It's a judgment of God upon you, says she, for not knowing your Catechism; for if so be you had got it by heart, you would have riz with the rest, and then all this would never have happened. But it's a judgment upon you, says she, and the schoolmistress said the same thing; till between both the poor thing was so scared, he set to work, he did, at his Catechism, and never rested, day or night, till he had got it by heart, as he has now, so thoroughly, you may dodge him any how, backward or forward, and he won't miss a syllable. And that's how he come by it, Sir, as well as the nickname: for except Catechism, which his head is too full of, I suppose, to hold any thing else, he don't know a thing in the world."

"Poor fellow!" said my father, opening one of the surgery drawers. "Here, Jack, will you have a lozenge?"

"Yes, verily, and by God's help, so I will. And I heartily thank——"

"There, there, hush! go along with you," said the woman, giving her protégé a push towards the outer door, and then,

taking up the medicine, with a nod of acknowledgment to Mr. Postle, and a curtsey to my father, she departed, her forlorn charge clinging to her garments, and muttering scraps of that formula which had procured for him the *soubriquet* of Catechism Jack.

CHAPTER VII.

A PATIENT.

"Poor creature!" muttered my father, carefully fishing a drowning fly out of the inkstand with the feather end of a pen, and then laying the draggled insect to dry itself on the blotting paper; "poor harmless, helpless creature!"

The assistant stopped his pounding, and looked inquisitively, first at the speaker, and then at the supposed object of his sympathy.

"I wonder," continued my father, still talking to himself, "if he would like to carry out the medicine?"

Mr. Postle hastily resumed his mortar-practice, with an interjectional "Oh!"

"Job is gone, I suppose?"

Mr. Postle pounded like mad.

"Job is gone, isn't he?" repeated my father.

"Yes, with the best livery."

"In that case," said my father, heedless of the best blue and drab, "we shall want another boy. And I'm thinking, Postle, that yonder half-witted fellow might, perhaps, carry the basket as well as another."

"What, the Catechism chap! Why, he's an idiot!"

"Or nearly so," said my father; "and, as such, shut out

from the majority of the occupations by which lads of his rank in life obtain a livelihood. The greater the obligation, therefore, to prefer him to one of the few employments adapted to his twilight intelligence."

"What—to carry out the physic?"

"And why not?"

"Nothing," said Mr. Postle, but plying the pestle as if he would have pounded the mortar itself into a powder, "nothing at all. Only when an idiot carries out physic, it's time to have a lunatic to make it up."

"Phoo! phoo!" said my father, "the boy has arms and legs, and quite head-piece enough for such simple work. At a verbal message, no doubt, he would blunder."

"Yes—wouldn't he?" said Mr. Postle. "Take of compliments and Catechism, each a dram—mix—shake well up —and administer."

"Like enough," said my father, "if one entrusted any verbal direction to his memory. But he goes on parish errands, and knows every house in the place; and might surely deliver a written label at the right door, as well as a printed notice."

"I wish," said Mr. Postle, gloomily, "there may be any to deliver. Our drugs *are* drugs! We hardly do a powder a day. The business is in a rapid decline, and in another month won't be worth a pinch of magnesia. There's the Great House gone already—and next we shall lose the parish."

"How!—the Great House?" exclaimed my father, with more anxiety and alarm than he had betrayed before about his simious patient. "Is the monkey dead, then?"

'Yes—of bronchitis."

"Poor child!" ejaculated my father.

"I should like to open him," said Mr. Postle.

"I hoped she was provided for," said my father with a sigh.

"If you mean little Betty," said the assistant, "it is no loss to her,—at least to judge by Mother Hopkins's language."

"Why, what does she say?" asked my father, with a tone and look of unmitigated surprise.

"Only all that is bitter and acid. The ungrateful old hag! I should like to stop her mouth with a pitch plaster!"

"Hush, hush!" whispered my father; and Postle did hush, for, confirming an old proverb, Mother Hopkins herself hobbled into the surgery, with foul weather on her face. Her lips were compressed—there was a red angry spot in the middle of each sallow cheek, and anger glimmered in her dark black eye like a spark in a tinder-box. She spoke harshly and abruptly.

"I'm come to return the bottles."

"Very good!" said my father, receiving phial after phial from the cankered woman, with as much courtesy and humility as if he had been honoured and obliged by her custom. "I hope the medicine has done you good. How is your lameness?"

"As bad as ever."

"I am sorry to hear it," said my father; "but your complaint is chronic, and requires time for its treatment. By-and-by we shall see an amendment."

"We shall see no such thing," said the Shrew. "I arn't going to take any more physic."

"No!"

"No. It's good for nothing, or you wouldn't give it away gratis."

My father's face flushed slightly—as whose would not?—with so much physic thrown into it, though but metaphori-

cally—all the draughts and embrocations he had supplied her with for the last six months! But the angry hue passed away long ere one could have washed off a splash of rose-water. It was hard for him to be long angry with any one,—impossible, with a decrepit woman, so poor, so sickly, and so ragged. One glance at her cooled the transient heat in an instant. As to speaking harshly to so much wretchedness, he would as soon have poured vitriol on her tatters. His words were still kind, his voice cordial, his smile genial.

"Well! and how is little Betty?"

"Little Betty's at home," replied the woman, with a short sharp twang in her tone that showed the very chord most out of tune had been struck upon. "She might have been at the Great House;—but, thank God, she isn't. She's not an animal!"

"You mean a beast!" suggested my father.

"I say she's not an animal—nor shan't sleep with one. And a monkey, too—a nasty, filthy, basilicon monkey!"

"'Brazilian,' muttered my father—"Brazilian.'

"Well, Brazilian—an ugly, foreign, outlandish varment!"

"Ah," exclaimed my father, "there's the prejudice! If the creature had been a little dog, now, or a kitten, or a squirrel, you would never have objected to it."

"Squirrels and kittens be hanged!" cried the old woman, waxing in wrath. "It an't the sort of creature—it an't the species; but the detriment to the juvenile constitution. A doctor might know better the vally of the natural warmth of the human body than to have it extracted by a brute beast."

My father was dumbfoundered. The charge was so plausible, and couched in such set phrase, that he did not know what to think of it; but appealed, by a perplexed look, to his assistant.

"Prompted—put up to it," muttered Mr. Postle, in a

characteristic *aside*. He had turned his back to the counter, and was apparently reading aloud the label on one of the drawers. The woman, in the mean time, thrust the last phial into the Doctor's hand as hastily as if it burnt her fingers.

"That's all the bottles," she said; "and there," throwing a paper bag on the counter—"there's the corks."

O Ingratitude!—marble-hearted fiend!—how hadst thou possessed that thankless woman with a demon, fit only, like those of old, to inhabit a swine. Weekly, daily, recalling the better times she had known, she had bemoaned her inability to fee a physician, or pay an apothecary; daily, almost hourly, she had lamented the delicate constitution of her little Betty, and the impossibility of furnishing her with a better bed, more generous diet, and warmer garments—wants for which, by will and deed, her benefactor had endeavoured to provide; and to throw, in his very teeth, all his charitable unguents, lotions, composing draughts, and tonic mixtures, bottles and corks included, and then, in return, to pour on his benevolent head the full phials of her wrath, bitter as the waters of Marah, and corrosive as aqua fortis! It might have moved a saint! But there was in my father's nature so much of the milk of human kindness, and in that milk such a sweet butterish principle, that stirring his temper the wrong way seemed merely to oil it. Thus, when he responded again to the querulous ingrate, it was as the music of an Æolian harp in the parlour-window to a hurdy-gurdy at the area rails.

"'Well, well—we need not quarrel, Mrs. Hopkins. The monkey is dead, and so there is no harm done. I meant all for the best, and hoped to do you a service. Little Betty would have been comfortably lodged, and well fed, and was to be warmly clothed from head to foot."

"Thank ye for nothing!" retorted the snappish one. "I can clothe little Betty myself: and when she famishes for victuals and drink, and not afore, she shall sleep with apes, baboons, and orange outangs."

"Orang," said my father, *sotto voce*—"o—rang."

"Well—horang. I should like to see your own twins, I should, with a great Wild Man of the Woods in their cradle!"

My father's lips moved to reply; but before he could utter a syllable he was forestalled by a noise like the groan of execration which is sometimes heard at a public meeting. All eyes turned in the direction of the sound; and lo! there stood Kezia, her mouth still open and round as that of a cannon, her eyes staring, her cheeks both of a crimson, her arms uplifted, and her hands clenched with utter indignation. One of her many errands to the surgery had brought her just in time to overhear the atrocious wish that converted her, *pro tempore*, into a she-dragon. In another moment she confronted the cantankerous Mrs. Hopkins, who assumed an attitude of defiance, and plainly showed that if the flesh was weak the spirit was willing enough for the encounter. My father would fain have interfered, but was intreated, by signs and in a whisper, by Postle, not to "check the effervescence."

But the combatants shall have a chapter to themselves.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ALTERCATION.

Those two angry females—just imagine them, ripe for their verbal duel!—Mrs. Hopkins fierce, resolute, and pale as the mask, in marble, of an ancient Fury: Kezia, with her

homely person, coarse limbs, scrubby head, staring eyes, and that violent red blotch on her cheek, not unlike the ill-painted figure-head of the Bellona, or some such termagant ship of war.

"O you wretch!" began Kezia, panting for utterance.

"Wretch yourself!" returned the woman. "Who gave you leave to meddle?"

"Those babes—those blessed babes!" exclaimed Kezia; "to want them devoured in their innocent cradle by a wild man of the woods! Babes only fit to devour with kisses—and such as would soften any heart but a stone one, that nothing will touch, except the fizzling stuff as cleans marble!"

"Say, muriatic acid," suggested Mr. Postle.

"Twin babes, too!" continued Kezia, "the very pictures of heavenly innocence—and might sit to a painter for a pair of Cherubims!—and to abuse them so—it's almost blasphemy—it's next to irreligious!"

"Heyday!" exclaimed Mrs. Hopkins; "here's a fuss, indeed, about babies!—As if there was no more of them in the world! Prize ones, no doubt. I should like to see them soaped and scrambled for!"

"You would!" cried Kezia, almost in a scream;—"you would! Oh! you wicked, wicked monster!"

"Monsters are for caravans," said the woman; "and if I was you, before I talked of monsters, I would go to some quack doctor,"—and she glanced viciously at my father—"for a cosmetical wash, to make both my cheeks of a colour."

"My cheeks are as God made them," said Kezia; "so it's Providence's face that you're flying into, and not mine. But I don't mind personals. It's your cruel ill-wishing to those precious infants; and which to look at would convert a she-

ogress into a maternal character. Do you call yourself a mother?"

"Do *you*?" asked the woman with a spiteful significance.

"No, I don't," answered Kezia, "and not fit I should. I'm a single spinster, I know, and therefore not a mothery character; but I may stand up, I hope, without committing matrimony, for two helpless innocent babes. Dear little infants, too, as I've washed, and worked for and fed with my own hands; and nussed on my own lap; and lulled on my own buzzum; and as such I don't mind saying, whomever attacks them, I'm a lioness with her yelps."

"Whelps, Kizzy, whelps," but Kizzy was too angry to notice the correction.

"A rampant lioness sure enough! And if I was your keeper," said Mrs. Hopkins, with a malicious glance at my father, "I'd keep you to your own den. The business hasn't improved so much, I believe, as to require another assistant."

The wrath of Kezia was at its climax. Next to an attack on the family, a sneer at the business was a sure provocative. "I know my place," she said, "and my provinces. It's the kitchen, and the back kitchen, and the washus, and the nussery; and if I did come into the surgery, it was to beg a little lunatic caustic to burn off a wart. As for our practice, Mr. Postle must answer for himself. All I know is, he can hardly get his meals for making up the prescriptions; what with mixing draughts, and rolling pills and boluses, and spreading blisters, and Bergamy pitch plasters, and pounding up drugs into improbable powders."

"Impalpable," said my father.

"Well, impalpable. Not to name the operations, such as cupping, and flea-botany, and distracting decayed teeth."

"*Ex*tracting," said my father, "the other would be a work of supererogation."

"Well, extracting—and the vaccinating besides,—and all the visiting on horseback and on foot,—private and parishional,—including the workus. Then there's Master himself," continued Kezia, dropping a sort of half curtsey to him, as an apology for the liberty of the reference,—"if he gets two nights' rest in a week, it's as much as he does, what with confinements, and nocturnal attacks, and sudden accidents—it's enough to wear out the Night Bell! There was this very morning, between one and two, he was called up out of his warm bed, to the Wheel of Fortune, to sow up a juggler."

"Jugular," said my father.

"Well, jugular.—And the night before, routed out of his first sleep by a fracturous rib. I only wonder we don't advertise in the papers for a partner, for there's work enough for a firm. First there's a put-out shoulder to be put in again,—then a broken limb to set,—and next a cracked penny cranium to be japanned——"

She meant trepanned, and the correction was on my father's lips, but was smothered in the utterance by the vehement Mrs. Hopkins. "Japan, a fiddlestick!" she cried, impatiently rolling her head from side to side, and waving her hands about, as if battling with a swarm of imaginary gad-flies. "What do I care for all this medical rigmarole?"

"Oh! of course not!" said Kezia, "not a brass button. Only when people affront our practice, and insinuate that we have a failing business, it's time to prove the reverse. But perhaps you're incredible. There was no such thing, I suppose, as the pison'd charity-boy, with his head as big as two, and his eyes a-squeezing out of it, because of eating a large red toadstool, like a music-stool, in loo of a mushroom."

"There might, and there might not," said Mrs. Hopkins.

"I thought as much!" exclaimed Kezia, "and in course you never heard of the drownded female who was dragged out of the canal, a perfect sop! and was shocked into life again, by our galvanic battering?"

"I never did," replied Mrs. Hopkins.

"Oh no—not you!" said Kezia, bitterly. "Nor the stabbed Irishman, as was carried into this very surgery, all in a gore of blood, and pale, and fainting away, and in a very doubtful state indeed, till Master applied a skeptic."

"A styptic," said my father, "a styptic."

"Well, a styptic. And maybe you've not heard neither of the scalded child—from pulling a kettle of boiling water over her poor face and neck,—and which was basted with sweet oil, and drudged with flower, and was so lucky as to heal up without leaving a cockatrice."

"If I was you," said Mrs. Hopkins, "I would say a cicatrix."

"Well, perhaps I ought," said Kezia. "Howsomever there wasn't a scar or a seam on her skin,—so that's a cure at any rate. Then there's the Squire.—But, maybe, nobody has seen his groom come galloping, like life or death, to fetch Master to a consulting of the faculty—no, nor the messenger from the Rectory—nor the Curate himself dropping in here for medical advice,—quite out of sorts, he said, and as hoarse as a raven with a guitar."

"A catarrh," said my father, "a catarrh!"

"Well, catarrh—and couldn't swallow for an enlarged tonsor in his throat."

It is uncertain how much farther Kezia might have "carried on the business," and improved it, but for an importunate voice which began calling in a stage whisper for Mrs. H. Mrs. Hopkins looked towards the road, where a shadow had for some time been fluttering on the threshold, whilst part of the skirt of a female garment dodged about the

door-post, and a bobbing head now and then intercepted the sunshine, and uttered its subdued summons. But as Mrs. H. did not seem inclined to obey the call, the Unknown stepped, or rather stumbled, into the surgery, for she was purblind from a complaint in her eyes, and therefore wore a green shade, so deep, that it shadowed her crimson nose, like a pent-house over a pet carnation. The two females were obviously confederates, for the new-comer took up a position beside her predecessor, with a determined air and attitude which showed that the broadside of the Tartar would be supported by a volley from the Vixen. Kezia, who would have engaged a fleet of shrews in the same cause, maintained as bold a front, and there wanted but the first shot to bring on a general action, when my father interposed, and suspended hostilities by a friendly salute.

"Glad to see you, Mrs. Pegge."

"That's as may turn out," replied Mrs. Pegge, throwing back her head, with her chin up in the air, and looking along her nose, at the Doctor, in a posture, as it seemed, of the most ineffable disdain.

"Your sight must be better at any rate," said my father, "to let you come out so far without a guide."

"Well, it is better," said Mrs. Pegge, and then turning as on a pivot to her ally—"No thanks to nobody, eh, Mrs. H.?"

"Certainly not," said Mrs. Hopkins.

"I didn't follow the Doctor's directions,—did I, Mrs. H.?"

"Certainly not."

"And should have been no better if I had—eh! Mrs. H.?

"Not a tittle," said Mrs. Hopkins, "but quite the reverse."

"It isn't the hopthalmy at all,—is it, Mrs. H.?"

"By no manner of means."

"Nor gutty sereny—it don't come from the stomach—do it, Mrs. H.?"

"Not in the least."

"I never said that it did," put in my father, more tickled than hurt by the attack on his medical skill.

"Of course not," said Mrs. Pegge; "you'd have been wrong if you had,—for it's Amor Rosis—eh, Mrs. H.?"

"Exactly so—the very name," said Mrs. Hopkins.

"I can guess where they got that," muttered Mr. Postle, just loud enough to be heard by his principal; but my father was in too good a humour, and rubbing his nose too briskly to be accessible to sinister suspicions.

"Well, well," he said, with a tone and smile of conciliation enough to have smoothed a pair of ruffles into Quakerly wristbands. "Amor, in the eye, is a very common affection amongst females, and so you may be right. And in spite of all that has passed, should you or Mrs. Hopkins wish at any time for medical advice or medicaments——"

"Oh, no, no, no!" exclaimed Mrs. Pegge, tossing her head like a horse at the hay-rack. "We are poor,—but we won't be experimented on any longer—eh, Mrs. H.?"

"The Lord forbid!" cried Mrs. H. "We've been too much experimented upon already!"

"Perhaps," said Mr. Postle, determined to test his secret suspicions, "you had better seek other advice."

"Eh, what?" asked Mrs. Pegge, wheeling about with her green verandah, till she brought her red ferret-like eyes to bear on the assistant. "What might you say, young man?"

"I said, that perhaps you had better seek other advice."

"Perhaps *we have*," replied Mrs. Pegge, with a suppressed chuckle, and the usual appeal for confirmation to Mrs. H.

"We certainly did," said Mrs. Hopkins.

"And whatever was advised," said Mrs. Pegge, "there was one thing not recommended, namely, for a young child to sleep in an apiary—eh, Mrs. H.?"

"If you mean with a monkey," said Mrs. Hopkins, "most decidedly not."

Oh, no," said Mrs. Pegge, "Doctor Shackle knows better than that—eh, Mrs. H.?"

"I said so!" exclaimed Mr. Postle, with a slap of his hand on the desk that would have crushed a beetle into a dead flat.

"Hush, hush," whispered my father. "Dear me, you have killed the poor inky fly!"

"Curse the fly!" cried Mr. Postle, fairly beside himself with vexation. "I wish they had both been in its skin,—a couple of ungrateful old Jezebels!"

"He! he! he!" tittered Mrs. Pegge. "Some people will want one of their own cooling draughts!"

"Why, you ungrateful creature!" cried Kezia, whose face had been purpling and swelling with indignation till it seemed ready to burst like an over-ripe gooseberry. "I wonder you can name a 'fevervescing draught, for fear of its flying in your face!"

"Hoity toity!" said Mrs. Pegge, turning on Kezia, with her green shade over her glistening red eyes, like an angry Hooded Snake.—"What have we here?—A Hen Doctor—a 'pothecary in petticoats?"

"I don't mind names," answered Kezia, "so you may be as scrofulous as you please."

"Scurrilous," said my father.

"Well, scurrilous. I don't mind that," continued Kezia. "It's your base return for our pharmacy, and your sneers at our practice. Such shocking unthankfulness! And to think of all the good physic you have enjoyed, gratis!"

"Physic?" retorted Mrs. Pegge with a sneer of unutterable contempt. "Physic indeed! such physic! If it's so good, why don't you enjoy it yourself? I'm sure we don't

want to rob you of it. If it was worth any thing it wouldn't be given away—eh, Mrs. H.?"

"My own words," replied Mrs. Hopkins, "to a syllable."

"It's not physic at all!" said Mrs. Pegge.

"No!" exclaimed my father: "what then?"

"It's the grouts of other people's," said Mrs. Pegge, "and that's how we get it in charity. But come, Mrs. H., we have been long enough here."

"Quite," said Mrs. Hopkins.

"And it will be long enough before we come here again,—eh, Mrs. H.?"

"Ages," said Mrs. Hopkins; and drawing the arm of her purblind confederate under her own, she led her towards the door, through which,—the one stumbling and the other limping—the two ingrates groped and hobbled away, and were seen no more.

"Say I told you so!" exclaimed Mr. Postle, desperately snatching up the pestle, but grinding nothing, except some inarticulate execrations between his teeth. My father even looked a little grave; and as for Kezia, she could only stare up at the ceiling, flap her hands about, and ejaculate "Oh, I never!"

"Yes, Shackle's at the bottom of it all," muttered Mr. Postle, shrewdly adopting my father's own mode of thinking aloud as a vehicle for administering his private sentiments. "Those two beldams have been prompted by him, that's certain,—and he has been called in at the Great House."

"He has?" said my father.

Postle, however, took no notice of the interrogation, but shook his head, despondingly, and proceeded. "That infernal little monkey has done for us! We shall never be sent for again, master or mate. No, no, a doctor who couldn't save such a little creature would never preserve so

great a lady! So there is our best patient gone—gone—gone! And the Parish will go next, for Shackle has got the Board by the ear."

"Not he," said my father.

"Then he sells opium and we don't, and that gives him the village. The more fools we,"—and Postle shrugged his shoulders and elevated his eyebrows—"We're unpopular with rich and poor.—I should not wonder, some day, if we were even to be hung or burnt in effigy!"

My father smiled, and rubbed his nose, and none the less, that Kezia clasped her hands and groaned aloud at the imaginary picture. But he repented of his mirth, when he saw her eyes, swimming in tears, fixed alternately on himself, and the assistant, as if they were already swinging, like Guys, over the opprobrious bonfire.

"Postle—Mr. Postle"—he began, but the assistant continued his soliloquy.

"There's Widow Warner's child in one of her old convulsions——"

"Poor thing!" cried my father, "I will go and look to her directly!"

"But there has been no message," said Mr. Postle, suddenly waking up from his pretended fit of abstraction. "We're not sent for."

"No matter," said my father; and snatching up his hat, and clapping it on, the wrong side before, was about to hurry out of the surgery, when he was checked by an exclamation from Kezia.

"Gracious!—The yellow lamp is broke again!"

"Yes—last night—for the fifth time," said Mr. Postle.

"It is very strange," said my father, looking up at the gap in the fanlight, where there ought to have been a glass globe, filled with a certain yellow fluid; and which nightly

by the help of a lamp behind it cast a flaring advertisement over a post, across the road, and partly up a poplar tree on the opposite side of the way. "It is very strange—there must be some cause for it."

"Nobody breaks Shackle's green lamp," observed Mr. Postle.

My father made no reply; but, stepping hastily out of the surgery, set off—at what Postle called his acute pace, in opposition to his slower, or chronic one—towards the Widow Warner's Cottage.

CHAPTER IX.

OUR CARVER.

Amongst my father's little vanities—and in him it was partly professional—he rather piqued himself on his dexterity in dividing a fowl or cutting up a joint of meat. The performance, nevertheless, was generally a slovenly one, —not for want of skill in the operator, but through the fault of the carver, which was as blunt as any *messer* in Germany.

Every family has some standing nuisance of the kind,—a smoky chimney, a creaking door, a bad lock, a stiff hinge, or a wayward clock, which, in spite of a thousand threats and promises, never gets Rumfordized, oiled, mended, eased, rectified, or regulated. Our stock grievance was the carver. In vain Kezia, who never grudged what she called elbow-grease, rubbed the steel to and fro, and round and round, and laboured by the hour to sharpen the obstinate instrument; wherever the fault lay, in her manipulation, the metal, the knife-board, or the Flanders brick, the thing remained as

dull as ever. My father daily hacked and haggled, looked at the edge, then at the back of the blade, and passed his finger along both, as if in doubt which was which,—pshaw'd —blessed his soul—wondered who could cut with such a thing—and swore, for the hundredth time, that the carver must and should go to the cutler's. Perhaps, as he said this so positively, it was expected that the carver would go of itself to the grindstone: however, it never went; but Kezia and the knife rubbed on till the board, and the brick, and my father's patience were nearly worn out together. The dinner-tool was still as blunt as a spade; and might have remained so till Doomsday, but for the extraordinary preparations for the Christening, when, every other household article having undergone a furbishing, the eye of our maid-of-all-work fell on the refractory knife, which she declared—please the pigs—should go forthwith to be set and ground by Mr. Weldon the smith.

Luckily there was an errand due in the same direction; so huddling herself into her drab shawl, and flinging on her black bonnet, without tying the strings—for there was no time for nicety—away went Kezia through the village at her best pace—a yellow earthenware basin in one hand, and the naked carving knife in the other; a combination, be it said, rather butcherly, and to a country-bred mind inevitably suggestive of pig-sticking, and catching the blood for black puddings: but the plain homely Kezia, who seldom studied appearances, or an ideal picture of her own person, held sturdily on her way, with striding legs and swinging arms, the domestic weapon flashing to the sunshine in her red right hand. How her thoughts were occupied, may be guessed,—that the usual speculations of menials had no place in her brain. Instead of thinking of sweethearts, fairings, ribbons, new bonnets, cast-off gowns, tea and sugar, the kitchen

stuff, vails, perquisites, windfalls, petty peculations, warnings, raised wages, and what did or did not belong to her place, her mind was busy with the Baptism, the dear babes, Mrs. Prideaux, her master, mistress, and Mr. Postle, and generally all those household interests in which her own were as completely merged and lost as water in water. Amongst these the medical interest of course held a prominent place, and induced in her, not only a particular attention to the practice and the patients, but a general observance—which became habitual—of looks and symptoms, with a strong tendency, moreover, to exhibit what she called her physical knowledge. This propensity she was enabled to indulge in her passing along "the Street," a long straggling row of one-storied cottages, mud-built and thatched, and only separated by the road in front from the sluggish river, which added its unwholesome damps to the noxious effluvia from mouldy furniture, musty garments, and perhaps rancid provisions, and sluttish accumulations of dust and dirt, in dark, ill-ventilated rooms. At the back, dotted with stunted willow-pollards, and windmills, and intersected by broad ditches lay the Fens, a dreary expanse, flat as a map, and as diversely coloured by black and brown bogs, water, purple heath, green moss, and various crops, blue, red, and yellow, including patches of hemp and flax, which at certain seasons were harvested and placed to steep in stagnant ponds, whence the rotting vegetable matter exhaled a pestilential malaria as fetid in its stench as deadly in its influence on the springs of health and life. The eyes of Kezia rested, therefore, on many a sickly sallow face and emaciated frame amongst the men and women who lounged or worked beside the open windows, and even in some of the children that played round the thresholds, biting monstrous cantles out of slices of bread and butter, or nursing baby brothers and sisters only

half a size smaller than themselves. With all these people, big and little, Kezia exchanged familiar greetings, and nods and smiles of recognition, occasionally halting for a brief conference,—for example, to recommend "scurvy treatment" for little Bratby, to prescribe a dose of "globular salts" for the younger Modley, or to hint to Mrs. Pincott, whose infant was suffering from dentition, that its gums wanted "punctuation" with the lancet. But at one house she paused to deliver an especial salute; for on the door-step sat little Sally Warner, cuddling her arms in her pinafore, and upturning a cheerful chubby face, with a fair brow, bright blue eyes, and rosy cheeks, but sadly disfigured between the snubby nose and dimpled chin, and all round the pretty mouth, by an eruption which might have been averted by a timely dose of brimstone and treacle,—a spectacle Kezia no sooner observed than abruptly stopping for an instant, with a certain gesture, she pronounced certain ambiguous words, so appalling, in one sense, that the scared child immediately fled indoors to her widowed mother, on whose lap, after a paroxysm of grief and terror, she went off into one of those constitutional fits to which she had been subject from her cradle.

Poor Kezia! How little she dreamt that, by merely pointing at a child with a carving knife, and saying, "You want opening!" she was seriously endangering a young life! How little she thought that she was preparing for her dear master another of those mortifications which were beginning to throng round him so thickly as to justify the old proverb, that misfortunes never come single, but are gregarious in mischief, and hunt in packs like the wolves.

In the mean time my father, good easy man! walked on quite unconscious of the impending annoyance; for the incident of the carving-knife, which furnished this little

episode, occurred prior to the scene in the surgery recorded in the last chapter.

CHAPTER X.

THE VISIT; AND THE VISITATION.

A GOOD man, of kindly impulses, and contented with their gratification, is not apt to resent very violently the ungracious reception of his benefits; but, however indifferent on his own account, he cannot help feeling some vexation, partly for the sake of the ingrate himself, and partly on behalf of mankind in general. There is a wrong done to the species; a slur cast on human nature; and his cheek flushes, if not with personal indignation, with shame for his race. Thus, there are men whom a series of injuries, readily forgiven, has failed to convert into misanthropes; but has inspired, nevertheless, with a profound melancholy.

Something of this depression probably weighed down my father's spirits, seeing that he walked without his usual music, the whisper of a whistle, and looking earthwards besides—as if out of tune for sunshiny thoughts—into his own shadow—heedless alike of the sparrow's taking a dust-bath in the road, and the wagtail that kept just a-head of him by a series of short swift runs, its delicate legs almost invisible from the rapidity of their motion, and its tail, at every halt, balancing with that peculiar vibration from which the bird derives its name.

And yet the scene was much brighter than when he had last paced the same road: the day was fine, and the landscape as lovely and cheerful as its "capabilities" allowed. The river glittered in the sun; the bleak rose at the flies,

making numberless rings and dimples in the surface; and myriads of minnows and stickle-backs—for which the water was famous—wheeled and manœuvred in dark shoals, like liquid clouds, amidst the shallows; while larger fish skulked in the eddies round the lock-gates, or glistened silverly through the intricate golden arabesques that sparkled in the rippled water, and thence reflected, danced on the piles of the dam, and the supports of the Dutch-looking swing-bridge. For a swarm of expatriated Flemings had settled aforetime in the neighbourhood; and by the style of such erections had made the country, in its artificial features, as well as in its natural aspect, very similar to their own.

On the other hand lay the broad ditch; here and there widening into a little pool, that bristled with rushes and flags, amidst patches of brown water, and green scum, and aquatic weeds, enlivened by numerous yellow blossoms, like bathing buttercups, over which the red, blue or green dragon flies, all head and tail—like glorified tadpoles—darted about on their gauzy wings; or with a dipping motion, regular as a pulsation, deposited their eggs in the stagnant fluid; or settled, and clung motionless to some reedy stem. In the clear spaces, the water-spider, skating without ice, performed its eccentric evolutions on the surface; whilst clouds of gnats pertinaciously hovered over some favourite spot, though dissipated again and again by the flutter of the fly bird, hawking at insects, and returning after each short flight to perch on the same dead twig of the alder. The bank was gay with flowering weeds, and covered with tangled verdure —plants, shrubby, pyramidal, and pendulous, interlaced and festooned by straggling creepers and parasites, out of which, at intervals, struggled the trunk of the pollard willow, still clasped by the glossy ivy, and embossed with golden or emerald moss—or the silvery stem of the aspen, up-turning

at every breath the hoary side of its twinkling leaves, and changing its foliage from green to grey, and from grey to green, with the variable shades of the summer sea. The very slime oozing round the muddy margin of the pool, and filling the holes poached by the feet of horses and cattle, assumed prismatic tints; whilst the fresh plashes, running up into the road-ruts, glanced alternate blue and white with the shifting sky: in short, there was all the beauty that colour, change, light and shade, life and motion, can give to even common-place objects; and on which, generally, my father, a lover of nature, would not have turned a careless eye, no more than he would have let the sedge-bird warble, as unheard as invisible, amongst the waving reeds.

But his mind was preoccupied. In spite of himself the harsh voice of Mrs. Hopkins still echoed in his ear; he still saw the red and black eyes of Mrs. Pegge glimmering, like live charcoal, under their green shade. With every step, however, the image and the sounds became fainter, and the cloud passed away from his soul.

"Pshaw," he said to himself, "I am as unreasonable as the old women! Poor creatures that have hardly daily bread enough to justify a thanksgiving—and to expect from them a grace before and after a dose of physic! To be sure they might have been more civil—and yet, poor, ragged, infirm, disappointed in life, and diseased—the one half-blind and the other a cripple—what worldly sugar have they in their cup to sweeten their dispositions?—What cream of comfort, or soothing syrup, to make them mild, affable, and good-humoured? And besides, what do they meet with themselves from society at large but practical rudeness? Scorned and shunned because penniless and shabby; oppressed, snubbed, and wronged, because weak and powerless; neglected and insulted, because old and ugly; and unceremoniously

packed off at last, as no longer ornamental, useful or profitable, to that human lumber-hole, the workhouse! Accustomed to endure poverty without pity, age without reverence, want without succour, pain without sympathy,—what wonder if their minds get warped with their frames, and as sensitive to slights and affronts as their bodies to damp and cold winds,—if their judgments become as harsh as their voices, or if their tempers sharpen with their features? What wonder if their prejudices stiffen with their limbs—their whims increase with their wrinkles—their repinings with their infirmities—nay, if their very hearts harden with their fates, or their patience fails utterly under the tedious suffering of some chronic disease, which Art can only palliate, whilst Hope perhaps promised a cure? No, no, we must not expect too much from human nature under such trials, and so many privations!—And so let them enjoy their discontents," said my father, raising his voice: "the worse for them, poor souls, that they are past other pleasure!—and if grumbling be a comfort, who would grudge it, any more than their solitary luxury—a pinch of snuff?"

"Or a drop of lodnum," grumbled a surly voice.

My father looked up and recognised the speaker; but the man, gazing straight before him, as if suddenly seized with a stiff neck, passed hastily by, to escape the words which pursued him.

"Yes, yes, Roger Heap, or a dram of oxalic acid, which I would as soon sell you as the other. It's the curse of the county, what with their laudanum drops—and opie pills—and syruping the infants—and if ever I saw a flower like a well-frilled last night-cap it's the White Poppy!"

My father stopped, for he had reached the widow's pretty cottage, and stepping through the open front door, walked into the parlour. It was a small room, neatly but tastily

furnished; for Mrs. Warner had been left in easy circumstances by her late husband, a farmer, in those prosperous war times when farmers reaped golden harvests; and long before the distressed agriculturist learned to cry "*Ichaboe!* My glory is departed from me! and I am dependent for profitable crops on a species of foreign Penguin, of dirty habits!" His competence, indeed, was rapidly growing into a fortune, when he perished suddenly after a market-dinner by an accident which, communicated too abruptly to the widow, made her, prematurely, the mother of an infant, afflicted from its ill-starred birth with convulsions. A black profile of the father hung over the mantel-piece, beside the old-fashioned mirror; and in his vacant elbow-chair, beside the fire-place, reposed his favourite terrier, blind with age, and asthmatic, from the pampering of his mistress, whose whole affections were divided, though in unequal portions, between her little Sally and the dog. At the sound of a strange foot the wheezy animal uttered a creaking growl, but quickly began to thump the damask seat with his tail on recognizing my father, already met, or rather intercepted, by the widow, who, omitting her usual courtesy, placed herself directly before him, so as to bar his passage to the inner room.

"Well, and how is Sally?" asked my father, kindly looking down at the diminutive widow, for she was the smallest woman, to use the popular description, "that ever stood in shoe leather, not to be an absolute dwarft." Besides which, since Master Warner's death, she had pined and wasted away to a perfect atomy, and looked even less than she really was in that pinched cap and the black dress which reduced her figure. Not that she fretted visibly, or wept: her eyes shed no more tears than those of the peacock plumes over the old mirror; but if grief has a *dry rot* of its own, by that decay

she had crumbled away till her whole widowed body, as my father said, contained but just clay enough to make one little lachrymatory urn. In truth, she was singularly withered and shrivelled, and, in the common belief, still shrank so rapidly as to beget a notion amongst the more imaginative of the village children, that she would eventually dwindle to the fairy standard, and then disappear.

"Well, how is Sally?" asked my father: "I hear she has had a fit."

"She has," answered the tiny widow. Her very voice seemed smaller than usual, and to come, a mere sibilant murmur, through her thin compressed lips and closed teeth.

"Poor thing! I'll go in and look at her," said my father, making one step sideways, and then another forward.

"There is no need," said the widow, stepping one pace backward, and then another sideways, so as to still keep in his front.

"Is she well then?"

"No."

"I had better see her then," said my father.

"Doctor Shackle has seen her," said the widow.

"Quite right—he was the nearest"—replied my father, who was as free from the professional as from any other species of jealousy. "Quite right! then I am easy about her—for she is in good hands."

Just as my father pronounced this eulogium the object of it issued from the inner room; and the little widow, stepping apart, left the rival doctors—if there can be rivalry all on one side—standing face to face. What a contrast it was! my father, plump, rosy as a redstreak, and bright-eyed—one of those men of the old school who looked handsome in hair-powder; the other a tall bony personage, sandy haired, with large yellow whiskers, stony light grey eyes, a straight sharp

nose, high cheek-bones, colourless cheeks, and thin lips, parted in a perpetual smile that resulted less from good temper than good teeth—a proper enough personification of Lent, reminding one of the hard sordid dryness of the stock-fish, and the complexion of the parsnip. Then, his manners were cold and reserved, his voice uniform in its tone—his words few and sarcastic, and often marked in *italics*, by a sneering curl of the lip—one of those men from whose veins, if pricked, you would expect not blood but milk—not milk warm and sweet, but acrid like that of the dandelion—men whose livers, you feel sure, are white; their hearts of the palest flesh-colour, and always on the wrong side; their brains a stinging jelly, like the sea-nettle. That my father, one of the warmest of the warm-blooded animals, could endure such a polypus—that they could meet without his instinctively antipathising and flying off, was proof of his easy disposition, his exquisite temper, his child-like simplicity, large faith in human goodness, and catholic attraction towards all his race.

"Well, Doctor," said my father, "how is the little patient?"

"All safe now," answered Shackle. "But a terrible shock to the system—tremendous fit—brought on by a fright."

"A fright?"

"Yes: some fool or other, with a knife, or magical instrument, or something—threatened to rip her up."

"The brute deserved a flogging!" exclaimed my father.

"I think so, too," said Shackle, with a glance aside at the mother.

"Why, the brute, as you call her," began the widow, but was checked by Shackle, who placed his finger on his lip, and, stooping down to her ear, whispered,

"Assumed ignorance!"

"Poor child!" said my father; "I have been quite anxious about her."

"You must have been," said Shackle; "you came so quickly!" a sarcasm my father, in the innocence of his heart, mistook for a civility.

"It happened hours ago," remarked the little widow.

"Is it possible?" cried my father. "But I knew nothing of it—not a syllable."

Shackle said nothing, but looked incredulously at the widow, who replied by an almost imperceptible shake of the head.

"Postle only told me," said my father, "about ten minutes since."

"Oh, that Postle!" exclaimed Shackle, "what a treasure he must be!"

"He is, indeed," said my father, quite unconscious of the intended sneer.

"And that—what's her name?—Kezia?" cried Shackle, "taking such a family interest in everything—even to the medical practice!"

At the mention of Kezia and medical practice, the figure of the little widow appeared to dilate; her eyes flashed, and her tiny tongue began rapidly to moisten her thin lips; but before she could speak, Shackle broke in with some directions about the sick child; and then seizing my father by the arm, hurried him out of the cottage. "I have another case to attend," he said, "and a very urgent one.'

"I hope the present one," said my father, "is going on favourably."

"Oh, quite; she is all right;" answered Shackle. "By the by, I hope I am excused. There is a certain etiquette between medical men—and I ought to apologise for interfering with one of your patients."

"Not at all! not at all!" cried my father. "We are both of us engaged in the same great mission—co-operators in the good work of alleviating human suffering."

"Exactly so—of the same order of *charity*," said Shackle, with a sneering emphasis on the last word, intended secretly for my father's gratuitous practice. "Yes, both of us are of one fraternity, or, as we should be called abroad, Brothers of Mercy,"—a phrase which so delighted my father, that, seizing Shackle's hand between both his own, he warmly urged a request conceived some minutes before.

"With the utmost pleasure," replied Shackle, bowing, and returning the squeeze with apparent cordiality; and then the two doctors parted—one with an ivory smile on his face, that vanished the moment he turned his back; the other with a kindly glow on his countenance which promised to endure till the next meeting.

My father, however, instead of turning homewards, guided by some vague impulse, bent his steps towards the dwelling of the Hobbeses.—To see, after so many disappointments, how his kind intentions had thriven in that quarter? Perhaps so. Meanwhile little Sally was safe, and his whistle was resumed. He was conscious of the warmth and glory of the sunshine; heard and enjoyed the carol of the lark; observed the grey goose leading her callow yellow gulls across the road to the river; and laughed at the consequential airs of the hissing gander, as he sailed on, with raised stern, and one broken wing hanging down at his side, like the weather-board of a Dutch yacht. But a stranger spectacle was in store for him—a low mud cottage, rudely thatched with brown mossy straw and reeds—the broken panes of its one window stopped with dingy rags—and two men, in the livery of the magpie but repudiating its loquacity, in short, two Mutes, in black and white, standing one

on each side of the humble door! My father stopped and rubbed his eyes like a man "drowned in a dream." But no, there they were, the two mummers, with their paraphernalia in their hands, surrounded by an undress circle of the village children, backed by an outer ring of men and women, who stared over their black, white, brown, red, yellow, cropped or curly little heads.

In another minute there was a stir and murmur of expectation amongst the crowd—and first a black and white hat, and then a man in black with a white scarf, came stooping through the low door; followed by two other men in sables, carrying a little coffin, covered with French grey cloth, and studded with silvered nails. After a pause, as if to afford time for the spectators to gaze and comment on the handsome coffin and its ornaments, another attendant threw over it a black velvet pall with a white border; and then came forth the mourners, stumbling over the threshold, the Mother with a white handkerchief at her eyes; but the Father with his grief, all unveiled, writhing in his hard-featured yellow face. The silk hood and scarf but partially concealed the shabby ragged clothing of the poor woman; and the funeral mantle was far too short for the tall man, whose mud-stained corduroys were visible a foot below its skirt; whilst one half of his best and worst beaver, brown in colour and of no particular shape, bulged out roughly above the sleek hat-band which encircled it, and thence flowed down his nape, and with a full convex curve over his high round shoulders. There was a moan from the crowd as the mourners appeared, and then a hush, only broken by the sobs of the bereaved parents, whereat the tender-hearted of the circle looked tearfully at each other, and clasped their hands. At last the man in black with the white scarf—composing his face as it were to some inaudible Dead March

—solemnly took three steps forward, and then suddenly wheeling about, walked six steps backwards, with his eyes steadfastly fixed on the moving pall which followed him—and then three more steps backwards, but on his tiptoes, to look over the pall at the mourners—when, all being right, he turned round again, and walked on, as slowly as he could pace, to eke out the very short distance between the hut of mourning and the church. The crowd, which had opened to the procession, closed again, and followed in its wake—men, women, boys, and girls, all seriously or curiously interested in Death, except the vacant baby faces, which leaning chubbily on the mothers' shoulders, looked quite the other way.

"A foolish job, bean't it?" said an old woman, leaning on a crutch,—too lame to follow the funeral. "To chuck away money that way! Quite a waste, bean't it?"—and she put up a tin ear-trumpet, and turned its broad end towards my father.

"It is, indeed!" cried my father, surprised by such an echo of his own reflections.

"Ay, bean't it?" repeated the old deaf woman. "And such poor paupers as them too—as might have had a burying by the parish!"

My father hesitated to answer. He knew the poor well; their intense abhorrence of a parish funeral; and the extreme sacrifices they would make to subscribe to a burial society, and secure a decent interment. But he thought it best to chime in with the old woman's humour.

"Of course they might," he said. "The Hobbeses are on the parish books already, and the overseer would, no doubt, have given them an order on the parish undertaker."

"Who will take her?" asked the deaf woman.

My father loudly repeated his words.

"Ay—an order for a common deal box," screamed the old woman, in a voice so different to her former one, that my father looked round for another speaker. "A rough wooden thing, only fit for soap and candles! Look there!" and she pointed with her crutch—"I'd sooner bury a child o' mine, wi' a brickbat in yonder pool! But anything is good enow for the like of us to be packed into. Ay, an old tea-chest, or a forrin fruit-chest, with our pauper corpses a-bulgin out the sides, and showin, like the orangers, thro' the cracks!"

"No, no, no!" shouted my father.

"But I say yes, yes," cried the old woman. "Screwed down in a common box, and jolted off, full trot, to be chucked into the parish pit-hole—and a good riddance of old rubbidge! And better that than to be made a gift of, privily, to the parish doctor! Ay, you! you! you!" she screamed, shaking her cruch in my father's face—"with your surgical cuttings, and carvings, and 'natomizings! And can hardly have patience to wait till people are dead!"

"If I know what you mean," bawled my father, "I'll be natomized myself!"

"Oh! not you, forsooth!" answered the old woman, who had imperfectly heard the anecdote of Kezia and the carving-knife, and, like other deaf people, had made her own blundering version of the story. "But you long, you know you do, to cut open little Sally Warner, and to look in her inside for the cause of her fits!"

My father winced—it would have vexed Job himself.

"Plague take it!" he said, as much rumpled as it was possible for him to be in his temper. "I do believe some dog has run mad, and bitten all the old women in the village!"

"Ay, that comes home to you," cried the crabbed cripple.

"And mind Death don't come home too—to your own twin babies. To begrudge poor Sukey Hobbes her funeral! Suppose it was even a hearse-and-six, with ostrich plumage—and why not? An only child, quite a doting-piece, and begrudged nothing in life, by fond parents, if it cost the last penny, and why should she be begrudged by them in death—and gold and silver in the house? And which some say was flung in, by night, through the window by Doctor Shackle, and that he owns to it, or, leastways, don't deny it—but I say, chucked down the chimbly by a Guardian Angel, in the shape of a white pigeon, as was seen sitting on the roof."

"No doubt of it," shouted my father, rubbing his nose, and quite restored to good humour by his new metamorphosis. "There was a guardian angel seen lately sitting on a rock in America—only"—and he dropped his voice—"it turned out to be an exciseman tarred and feathered."

"That's true, then," said the old woman. "But the funeral will be coming back, and I must speak a condoling word to the Hobbeses. Poor souls! I know myself what it is to be childless—but it will be an everlasting blessed comfort and consoling to them to reflect they have given her such a genteel burying as was never seen afore in their spheres of life." And the old crone hobbled off on her crutch, leaving my father to whistle or talk to himself as he pleased. He did the last.

"Yes, the old deaf body is right. The money was intended for the comfort and consolation of the bereaved couple; and they were justified in seeking for them in the mode most congenial to their own feelings. An odd mode, to be sure, considering their usual habits and rank in life! And yet, why should not the poor have their whims and prejudices as well as the rich? Grief is grief, in high or low,

and, like other morbid conditions, is apt to indulge in strange fancies. So let the guineas go—there are worse lavishings in this world than on the obsequies of an only child! And after all, if the money went foolishly, it came quite as absurdly—for medical attendance on a sick monkey!"

CHAPTER XI.

OUR DOCTOR'S BOY.

THE surgery was quiet—the assistant leisurely making up some sort of medical swan-shot—when my father entered, and hung up his hat.

"Well, I have met Doctor Shackle at last:—he was at Mrs. Warner's—and the child is better."

"I should like to meet him too," observed Mr. Postle, very calmly in tone, but squeezing his finger and thumb together so energetically, that the bolus which was between them—instead of a nose—was flattened into a lozenge.

"Then you will soon have that pleasure," said my father, "for I have asked him to the christening."

Mr. Postle turned faint, sick, red, and then white, with disgust: symptoms the Doctor must have observed, but that his attention was absorbed by a phenomenon elsewhere.

It was Catechism Jack,—who after a preliminary peep or two from behind the door-post, at last crept, with a sidling gait and a sheepish air, into the surgery, where by eccentric approaches, like those of a shy bird, he gradually placed himself at the counter.

"Well, Jack," said my father, "what do you want?"

Jack made no reply; but dropping his head on his right

shoulder, with a leer askance at my father, plucked his sodden finger out of his mouth, and pointed with it to one of the drawers.

"You see," said my father, in an aside to Postle, "the fellow is not quite a fool. He remembers where the lozenge came from."

"Mere animal instinct," answered Postle, in the same under tone: "a monkey would do as much, and remember the canister where he got a lump of sugar."

"I will try him further," said my father, putting his hand in the drawer for a lozenge, which he held out between his finger and thumb. "Well, Jack, what will you do if I give you this?" Jack eyed the lozenge—grinned—looked at my father; and then drawled out his answer.

"I'll say my Catechism."

"No, no, Jack, cried my father, "we don't want that. But will you be a good boy?"

"Yes," said Jack, his head suddenly drooping again, while a cloud passed over his face. "Yes, I will,—and not tumble down stairs."

"Poor fellow!" said my father. "They made a fault of his misfortune. I have a great mind to take him. Should you like, Jack, to get your own living?"

"Yes," answered Jack with alacrity, for my father had unconsciously given him a familiar cue—"to learn and labour truly to get my own living, and to do my duty in that state of life to which it may please God to call me."

"Catechism again!" whispered Mr. Postle.

"Yes, but aptly quoted and applied," answered my father. "Do you know, Jack, what physic is?"

Jack nodded and pantomimically expressed his acquaintance with medicine by making a horrible grimace.

"Well, but speak out, Jack," said my father. "Use your

tongue. Let us hear what you know about it. What's physic?"

"Nasty stuff," said Jack, "in a spoon."

"Yes, said my father, "or in a wine-glass, Jack, or in a cup. Very good. And do you remember my foot-boy Job, who used to carry out the physic in a basket?"

Jack nodded again.

"Should you like to take his place, and carry out the medicine in the same way?"

"I—don't—know," drawled Jack, sympathetically sucking his finger, while he ogled the little oval confection, which my father still retained in its old position.

"Do you think you could do it?'

Jack was silent.

"Would you try to learn?"

"I learn two things," mumbled Jack, "my duty towards God, and my duty towards my neighbour."

"Not very apposite that," muttered Mr. Postle.

"Not much either way," answered my father; and he resumed the examination.

"Well, Jack, suppose I were to take you into my service, and feed and clothe you—should you like a smart new livery?"

"Yes."

"And a new hat?"

"Yes."

"And if I were to give you a pair of new shoes, would you take care of them?"

"Yes," answered Jack, "and walk in the same all the days of my life."

"There!" said my father, giving Postle a nudge with his elbow; "what do you think of that?"

"A mere random-shot," answered Mr. Postle.

"Not at all," said my father, turning again to his protégé. "Well, Jack, I have a great mind to give you a trial. If I take you into the house, and find you in a good bed, and comfortable meals, and a suit of clothes, and provide for you altogether, would you promise to behave yourself?"

"They did promise and vow three things in my name," answered Jack; "first, that I should renounce the devil and all his works ——"

"Yes, yes," cried my father rather hastily, for Postle was grinning. "We know all that. But would you take care of the basket, Jack, and leave the medicine for the neighbours at the right houses, and attend to your duty?"

"My duty towards my neighbour," answered Jack, "is to love him as myself; and to do to all men as I would they should do unto me—Give us the lozenge."

My father gave him the lozenge, which the lad eagerly popped into his mouth, occasionally taking it out again, to look edgeways at its thinness, till all was gone; and then deliberately licked his sweetened hand, beginning at the thumb, and ending with the little finger. My father, who had watched every motion with intense interest, mechanically turned round to the drawer for another "Tolu;" but falling into a fit of musing at the same time, forgot the destination of the lozenge, and eventually clapped it into his own mouth, to the infinite discomfiture of Jack, who by a sudden depression of his features, while his head dropped on his bosom, and his arms fell straight by his sides, typified very vividly the common catastrophe of the Hope going down with all hands.

"Yes, my mind is made up," said my father, awakening from his reverie. "At any rate the unfortunate creature shall have a chance. With a little looking after at first, he will do very well."

Mr. Postle looked earnestly at my father, with an expression which might be translated "What next?"—then up at the ceiling with a shrug which signified "Lord, help us!"—and then performed "Confound it!" by a frantic worrying of his hair, as if it had been wool or flock that required teasing. To remonstrate, he knew, was in vain. My father, in ordinary cases, was not what is called pig-headed; but in matters of feeling, his heart, as Postle said, was "as obstinate as the influenza, which will run its own course." In fact, from that hour "the Idiot" was virtually engaged *vice* Job,—for the parish of course made no objection to the arrangement; and as to the old dame, his guardian, my father found means, never exactly known, to reconcile her to the loss of her charge and the stipend. So, the thing being settled, Mr. Postle made the best of it, and endeavoured to initiate his subordinate in his duties: but it was hard work, and accordingly Kezia volunteered her help to convert Jack into our Doctor's Boy.

"To be sure," she said, "his faculties were not over bright, and he would protrude his catechiz at unseasoned times; but he was very willing, and well-disposed, and an orphan besides, and, as such, every woman ought to be his mother." And truly, however she found time for the labour, she turned him out daily so trim and clean, that could she have scoured up his dull mind to the same polish, Jack would have been one of the smartest boys in the parish.

CHAPTER XII.

OUR GODFATHER.

A MONTH and two days of our little lives had passed away, and another evening was in the wane, without any appearance of our worthy Uncle and Godfather elect, the rich and respectable Mr. Jinkins Rumbold.

He had written, briefly indeed, to accept the sponsorship, and to beg that the spare bed might be regularly slept in, seeing that he was subject to the rheumatism: but, although the morrow was appointed for the Christening, still he came not. No—although his mattress, thanks to the indefatigable Kezia, was well shaken, his blankets thoroughly aired, his sheets sweetly lavendered—a fire laid ready for lighting in the grate—a bowpot, daily renewed, on the mantel-shelf—and the Book of Common Prayer, with the leaf turned down at the Public Baptism of Infants, deposited on the walnut-wood table.

My mother was in despair; for she was a devotee of a very ancient and numerous sect, renowned for self-torture and voluntary martyrdom. Not that she ever scourged or flagellated her own body with cords or rods, or gashed her flesh with knives, or seared it with uncut talons, or wore sackcloth next her skin, or emaciated her frame by long fasts or frequent vigils; but for such painful exercises as lying on metaphorical thorns, sitting on figurative pins and needles, or hanging on colloquial tenter-hooks, she was a first-class saint of the self-tormenting order of the Fidgets.

"It don't signify!" she said in a crying tone, and flouncing down in the great white dimity-covered chair in the bedroom, as if her legs had suddenly struck work. "I'm quite worn

out! If my brother means to stand for his nephews, he ought to be here by this time. Here we are, as I may say, on the very brink of the font, and no godfather!—at least, not certain. It is running it cruelly fine; it is, indeed!"

As my mother during these observations had first looked down at the floor, as if addressing the spirits under the earth, and then up at the ceiling, as though appealing to all the angels in heaven, Mrs. Prideaux, in her intermediate sphere, did not feel called upon to reply, but continued quietly to rock the cradle.

"A stranger," continued my mother, "might be excused for indifference; but when a brother and an uncle exhibits such apathy, what *is* one to think?"

Still the nurse remained silent; for the speaker, during her apostrophe, had fixed her eyes on the neglected twins. But my mother was yearning for sympathy, and, therefore, aimed her next appeal point blank at the mark.

"I confess it does fret and worry me; but it is too bad, Mrs. P.; is it not?"

"Not having the pleasure to know the gentleman," replied Mrs. P., "I must beg to decline hazarding an opinion. The delay may have proceeded from procrastination, or it may have arisen from some accident."

"Gracious Heaven!" exclaimed my mother, clasping hands as if wrung by some positive calamity. "Yes, you are right! There must have been an accident! You only echo my own misgivings. There have been heavy rains lately, and the waters are out of course. Oh! my poor, dear, drowned brother! To think that, perhaps, whilst I am blaming and reproaching you——"

She stopped, for at that very instant the door opened; and, ushered in by my father, and closely followed by Kezia, the dear undrowned brother walked into the chamber, per-

fectly safe and dry, and not a little astonished at the hysterical scream and vehement caress with which he was welcomed.

At last my mother untwined her arms from his neck, and sank again into the easy chair.

"Thank God!" she exclaimed, "you are safe! But oh! how changed!" an observation she prudently whispered to herself; but which, nevertheless, was plainly telegraphed by the workings of her features. And truly the alteration she beheld would have justified a louder exclamation. From top to toe, the former Jinkins Rumbold had undergone a complete metamorphosis. Instead of his old-fashioned wig—formal, as if cut in yew, by some Dutch topiarian—he wore his own hair, or rather a fringe of it, to his bald head;—the quaint pigtail, which used to dangle at his nape, was also retrenched; but his chin, by way of compensation, displayed a beard like a French sapper's. And where was his precise white cravat, with its huge bow? Discarded for a black silk kerchief, carelessly tied round his neck in the sailor style, with a lax double-knot. His silver knee and foot buckles were likewise gone; for his square-toed shoes were replaced by a kind of easy buskins, and his kerseymere shorts had become longs, as wide and loose as the trousers of a marine. His waistcoat was unique; and his coat—cut after some original pattern of his own—was remarkable for the number and amplitude of its pockets: fit, there was none. He seemed to have won a suit of clothes in a raffle, and to have adopted them for his own wear from the sole merit of being so easy and roomy that he could roll about in them—like a great oracle of those days, Doctor Johnson.

What an Uncle!—what a Godfather!

Well might Kezia gape and gasp like a hooked gudgeon at such a phenomenon! Nay, the genteel nurse herself opened

her eyes to a most vulgar width, and stared at the strange gentleman with a pertinacity quite inconsistent with her usual good manners.

My father alone was unmoved. Accustomed to the extraordinary whims and crotchets of sick and insane humanity, he was not surprised by the oddities of his kinsman, which he ascribed to their true source. The truth is, whilst the worthy drysalter remained in trade the monotonous routine of business induced and required a corresponding precision and formality of conduct and character. He had neither leisure nor leave to be eccentric. To caper and curvet on the commercial railroad is as dangerous as inconvenient and inconsistent. But once released from business and its habits, like the retired tradesman who sets up his fancy carriage, or builds his "Folly," he started his hobby. Its nature Chance helped to determine, by throwing into his way a certain treatise, by some cosmogony man of the Monboddo school, if not actually an unacknowledged work from the pen of the speculative philosopher, who maintained that Man, at the creation, had a tail like the Monkey. However, the original uncle Rumbold had so translated himself as to be hardly recognisable by his next of kin.

"Ah! I see how it is," he said. "You miss my wig and tail, and are boggling at my beard. A manly ornament, isn't it—as intended by the Creator? For eighteen months, sister—for a year and a half, brother-in-law—no razor has touched my chin, and, please God, never shall again—never! —at least while I preserve my reason. As for shaving, it's a piece of effeminacy, the invention of modern foppery; to say nothing of the degradation of having your nose, that very sensitive feature, and one of the seats of honour, pulled here and there, right and left, up and down, at the will of a contemptible penny barber."

"Very degrading, indeed," said my father, stroking his own chin with his hand, as if coaxing a beard to grow from it.

"If there's a ridiculous spectacle in the world," continued Uncle Rumbold, "it's a full-grown man, a son of Adam the Great, with his human face divine lathered like a dead wall at its whitewashing—now crying with the suds in his eye, and then spitting with the soap in his mouth—and undergoing all this painful, and absurd, and disgusting penance for what? Why, to get rid of the very token that gives the world assurance of a man."

"Ridiculous enough!" said my father.

"My wig, on the contrary, was an artificial appendage, and accordingly I have abandoned it. If, as a sign of mature age, nature ordains me to be as bald as a coot, so be it —I will go to my grave with an unsophisticated bare sconce. The same with my queue. If she had intended me to wear a pig's tail bound in black ribbon, at my nape, she would have furnished me with one, or at least the germ of one, at my birth—but she did not, and therefore I have docked off the substitute."

"So I perceive," said my father.

'Yes, sir, as a foreign anomaly. But a beard," resumed Uncle Rumbold, "is quite another thing—a hair-loom, as I may say, from our first ancestor. Its roots were implanted in Paradise—and its shoots grew and flourished on the chins of the patriarchs. And what can we conceive more awful and majestic than the beards, white as the driven snow, and reaching down to the girdle of Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob, in their old age? But would they have been looked up to and implicitly obeyed by the people as God's own vicegerents if they had shaved? Not they!—And what, I should like to

know, intimidated the barbarian Gauls when they invaded the Roman Capitol?"

"A flock of cackling geese," cried my mother, who had some random recollections of ancient history.

"A flock of cackling fiddlesticks!" replied Uncle Rumbold. "It was the beards, the venerable beards, of the Roman Senators. And I cannot help thinking that if our Members of Parliament adopted that classic fashion, and no men appeal oftener to the classics, they would not only deliberate with far more gravity and decorum, but frame laws much more wise, and profound, and just, than they do at present. In fact, all the great lawgivers wore beards. Look at Moses!—look at Solon!—look at Lycurgus!—look at our Alfred."

"If you please, sir," said Kezia—her patience worn out to the last thread—"won't you look at our twins?"

"Eh? what?" snapped Uncle Rumbold, annoyed in his turn, and waving off the maid of all work with an impatient sweep of his oratorical right arm. "By and by, my good woman, by and by. The twins, I suppose, are pretty much the same as other infants—little fat human squabs."

"As you please, sir," replied Kezia, with a courtesy, but heightening in colour and expression towards a Red Lioness. "All I know is, they are such a pair of twin nevies as any uncle might be proud of—if he was the Grand Turk himself!"

"Well, well," said Uncle Rumbold, rather pleased than piqued by the allusion to his Oriental appendage. "Where are they? Oh, yonder!—Poor little wretches!"

"Poor little wretches!" exclaimed an echo, very like the voice of Kezia, but attributed by Uncle Rumbold to Mrs. Prideaux.

"Yes, poor little wretches!" he repeated, addressing himself to the nurse. "I do pity them—for of course they are to be bound up and bandaged like young mummies of the Nile."

"I presume you mean swaddled, sir," replied Mrs. Prideaux.

"I do, ma'am," said Uncle Rumbold, "that is to say, imprisoning their young tender free-born limbs with linen rollers and flannel fetters, and other diabolical contrivances for cramping the liberty of nature. But perhaps, ma'am, you wear garters?"

The genteel nurse assented, with a slight bend of acquiescence.

"Because I never do," said Uncle Rumbold. "I detest all ligatures; they check the circulation of the blood, and consequently the flow of ideas. I once got upon my legs, with garters on, to speak in public, and I broke down at the very first sentence—I did, indeed! No, no—no ligatures for me! Look here, ma'am—and he threw open the bosom of his waistcoat—"no braces, you see!—but one garment buttoned on the other, like a schoolboy's."

"I am no judge, sir, of masculine habiliments," replied the genteel nurse; "but of the infantine costume I can speak, which is the same as custom prescribes in the highest families."

"Custom!" exclaimed Uncle Rumbold. "Confound custom! Why not be guided by the light of nature?" And he gave such a rhetorical blow on the head of the cradle, that the twins started broad awake in a fright, and began to pipe in concert like a double flageolet. In another moment they were sending their smothered cries, through stuff and linen, into the bosom and very heart of the maid of all work who, with an infant on each arm, hurried to the door, which

she contrived to unfasten, and then pushed wide open, with one leg and foot.

But Uncle Rumbold either overlooked or withstood the hints, and continued his harangue to the nurse.

"In the savage state, ma'am, the human animal has no swaddling. Look at the wild American papoose."

"But ours an't papooses," cried Kezia—"they're babbies."

"Pshaw!—nonsense, woman!" said Uncle Rumbold. "Go to your kitchen. I say, ma'am, the human animal, in a state of nature, is never swaddled!—never! For example, the American Indians. Let us suppose that those two infants there, in the housemaid's arms, were young Crows, or Dog-Ribs——"

"I won't suppose any such falsities!" cried the indignant housemaid.

"Hush! hush, pray hush!" whined my mother. "Kezia, do hold your tongue, or I shall go distracted!" As in fact she was, poor woman, between her dread of offending our wealthy Godfather, and her horror of his doctrines. But my father enjoyed the discussion, and was sawing away with his forefinger across the bridge of his nose, as if it had been that of a fiddle.

In the mean time my mother's interruption had drawn Uncle Rumbold's discourse upon herself. "I don't know, sister," he said, "if my spiritual capacity of Godfather invests me with any control over their physical education; but if those two boys were mine, every blessed day of their lives, wet or dry, shade or shine, hot or cold, they should enjoy for an hour or two the native liberty of their limbs, and sprawl and crawl as naked as they were born, on the grass-plot."

"Gracious goodness!—On the damp lawn!"

"Ay, or soaking wet, if it so happened; and what's more

the youngsters should have to climb some tree or other for their suspended victuals."

"Why the poor things would starve!" exclaimed my mother.

"Not they," said Uncle Rumbold. "Trust to the light of nature! Hunger and instinct would soon teach them to scramble up the stem, like young monkeys—ay, as nimble as marmosets!"

My mother shook her head. "But they would sprawl and crawl into the fish-pond."

"So much the better," said Uncle Rumbold, "for then they might have a swim."

"But does that come by nature, too," inquired my mother.

"Of course," answered Uncle Rumbold—"as it does to a fish. Look at the savage islanders—I forget what author relates it—but when one of the native canoes or proas was upset, a little Carib, of a week old, who had never been in the water before, kept swimming about in the sea till the vessel was righted, as spontaneously as a dog."

My mother again shook her head.

"Fact, and in print," said Uncle Rumbold—"he was paddling about like a water-spaniel; and why not? The art of swimming is innate. Take your own twins, there, and chuck them into the river opposite——"

"The Lord forbid!" ejaculated my mother, to which Kezia responded with as fervent an "Amen."

"I say, chuck them into the river," repeated Uncle Rumbold, "and you will see them strike out with their arms and legs as naturally as frogs. In fact, it is my decided opinion that man in his pristine state was intended by the Creator to be amphibious."

"Did you ever make, personally, any experiments in natation?" inquired my father, in his most serious voice.

"Why, I can't say that I ever did, exactly," replied Uncle Rumbold. "But what does that signify, when I'm convinced of my theory? However, as I said before to my sister, if I am to have any share in the physical education of my godsons, those are the principles upon which, guided by the light of nature, I mean to act."

My father made a low bow, so low, that it would have seemed farcical, but for the air of profound gratitude which he contrived to throw into his countenance; but my mother involuntarily uplifted her hands and eyes, while Kezia, forbidden to speak, gave a low groan or rather grunt.

"In the mean time," resumed Uncle Rumbold, "I have not forgotten a sponsorial offering," and diving his hand into one of the many huge cloth closets or pockets in his coat, he extricated with some difficulty a brown paper parcel, which he presented rather ostentatiously to my mother.

"No trumpery spoons, sister, or jingling corals," he said, as her fingers nervously fumbled at the string—"but something that, rightly employed, will increase in interest and be a benefit to the boys through life."

My mother's fingers trembled more than ever at these words, and twitched convulsively at the double knot, whilst a score of vague images, including a pile of Bank notes, to be invested in twin annuities, passed through her agitated mind. Kezia, with held breath, and broad undisguised anxiety in her party-coloured face, intently watched the unfolding of the successive coverings; and even in the well-bred Mrs. Prideaux curiosity triumphed so completely over courtesy, that she jostled and incommoded our Godfather in her eagerness to partake of the revelation. At last the inmost veil of lawn paper was removed.

"A book!" murmured my mother.

Kezia, fetching her breath again with a deep-drawn sigh, deposited the dear twins in the cradle and hastily left the room; while the genteel nurse, giving her head the slightest toss in the world, resumed her seat and her needle-work.

"A book!" repeated my mother.

"Ay, the Book of Books, as I call it," said Uncle Rumbold —"the Bible, of course, excepted."

"And a presentation copy," remarked my father, adroitly catching the volume as it slid off my mother's knees, "with the writer's autograph on the fly-leaf!"

"Yes—and a tall copy and unique, and privately printed," said Uncle Rumbold. "A work as original as scarce—as logical as learned—as correct as copious—as sensible as sublime—as captivating as convincing—as playful as powerful—as elegant as elevating—the life-long study of a profound philosopher—in short, a work worthy of its title—'The Light of Nature!'"

"It is all very fine, no doubt," said my mother.

"A perfect treasury—a mine of riches!" exclaimed Uncle Rumbold. "The Holy Testament excepted, the world has never received such a legacy. And this, as I believe, the only copy extant! A gift, let me tell you, sister, that nothing but our near relationship, and my anxiety for the future welfare of two—I say *two* nephews—could have extorted from me."

"A mine—a treasury—and a legacy," repeated my mother, with a tear, that might or might not be a pledge of sincerity, gushing from either eye. "You are very kind, I'm sure—very kind and considerate, indeed.—Who's there?"

It was Catechism Jack, come to announce that supper was on the table, in the parlour. So the conference in the bed-chamber broke up. Uncle Rumbold offered his arm to my

mother to lead her down stairs; and my father, whistling a march, in a whisper, brought up the rear. Nothing worthy of record passed during the meal, except that the guest received and relished the mixture which had been promised to him by letter at the suggestion of Mr. Postle, namely, "a draught of something comforting to be taken the last thing at night—say, diluted alcohol sweetened with sugar." The dose was even repeated—and then the parties separated, and retired to their respective chambers.

"Well, my dear," asked my father as he stepped into bed, "how did you like the 'Light of Nature?'"

"I wish," said my mother—but stopping short in the middle of her wish to give a vehement puff at the candle—"I wish I could blow it out!"

CHAPTER XIII.

OUR OTHER GODFATHER AND THE GODMOTHER.

"GEORGE!"

"Well?"

"How is the morning?" asked my mother, entering full-dressed, and accosting my father, as he looked over the Venetian half-blind of the parlour window.

"Why, I think," replied my father, "considering those low dirty-looking clouds, with tattered dripping skirts, lounging about the horizon, like ragged reprobates who have slept all night in the open air and the gutter, that we shall have a general sprinkling to-day, as well as the particular one in the church."

"I am always unlucky in my weather," grumbled my mother, "especially when it is wanted to be fine. We shall

be nicely soaked and draggled, of course; for the glass-coach must draw up at the turnstile-gate; and we shall have to paddle up the wet sloppy churchyard, and the path has been new gravelled, and the dripping yew-trees will green-spot all our things."

"You must take umbrellas and clogs," said my father.

"To go clattering up the avenue, and clattering with into the porch! And the poor children will catch colds, and have the snuffles," added my mother, taking a desponding look at the dull sky over my father's shoulder. "Yes, it will rain cats and dogs, sure enough!"

"There will be the less mobbing," suggested my father.

"That's no comfort!" retorted my mother. "I don't mind a crowd, or being a spectacle, or I should certainly object to walk in public with my brother; for, unless I'm mistaken, we shall have all the tag-rag and bobtail boys in the parish running after him like a Guy Fox. And Kezia too—as if it was necessary at a christening to dress up like a she-Harlequin, with cherry ribbons on a Mazarine blue bonnet, and a scarlet shawl over a bright green gown!"

"And our twins?"

"Oh, Mrs. Prideaux has kept *them* genteel—though it was a struggle too—what with the rosettes and lace quiltings that Kezia wanted to stitch on their caps and robes. And then Jack ——"

"What of him?" asked my father, with some alarm.

"I have only had one glimpse of him," replied my mother, "in his new livery; and clean washed and combed, and smartened up respectable enough, if he hadn't ornamented his jacket with a parcel of strips of French grey cloth, as well as a great bow stuck in his hat, with a white-headed nail. But Mr. Postle has stripped off his finery, and sent him out with the basket."

"Very good," said my father; "and my bearded brother-in-law, has he been called? He ought to be dressed and down by this time, for he hasn't to shave."

"Oh, pray don't joke about him," exclaimed my mother; "as it is, I'm sadly afraid he'll be affronted before he goes. Do all I can, I can hardly keep myself from flying out at his daring doctrines about the poor children—and, as to Kizzy, I verily believe she suspects he is an ogre in disguise. She can't bear him even to come near the infants, though he has only kissed them once since he came, and then she wiped their dear little faces directly, as if she thought they would catch his beard."

"And if they had," roared the gruff voice of Uncle Rumbold, as he pushed open the parlour-door which had been ajar; "if they had caught my beard, it's better than catching the chin cough. But come, come, no apologies; I'm not easily offended, or I should have been huffy just now with your housemaid, who told me to the hairy thing itself, that it ought to have been blue."

"Poor Kizzy," said my father, "she is plain and plain-spoken, but as honest and faithful as unrefined."

"Ah! a child of Nature," said Uncle Rumbold, "well, I like her all the better; and, if she has a sister disengaged in the same capacity, I'll hire her on the spot. The true old breed of domestic servants is almost worn out, nearly extinct in England, like the bustard and the cock-of-the-wood—partly their fault and partly our own, by always setting them too high or too low—over our heads or under our heels—either pampered like pet monkeys, or snubbed like born slaves—never treated according to the light of nature. For instance, there's the tender passion. It's notorious that nine-tenths of the poor girls in Bedlam went crazy from suppressed sweethearts, and yet, forsooth, no followers are to be allowed;

so that unless Molly falls in love with my lord, and John nourishes a flame for my lady, as he often does, by the way, they might as well have no human hearts in their bosoms. Whereas, servants have passions and feelings as well as ourselves—the same natural capacities for liking and loving—ay, and perhaps stronger at it too, as they are at scouring floors and scrubbing tables!"

How long this harangue might have proceeded is uncertain, probably till church time, but for a new arrival, our second godfather, the proctor from Doctors' Commons. In all outward and visible signs he was the direct antagonist of his co-sponsor. His beard and whiskers were cleanly shaved off; and although he was not bald, his hair was cropped as close as a pugilist's. Then his cravat was starched so stiffly, and tied so tightly, that he seemed in constant peril of strangulation: his coat fitted him like a skin, exhibiting a wasp-like figure suspiciously suggestive of stays; and his tight pantaloons were as tight as those famous ones, into which the then Prince of Wales could not get, it was said, without supernatural assistance. In his manners, besides, he was as prim and reserved as our uncle was free and easy, —so that while introducing Mr. Titus Lacy to Mr. Jenkins Rumbold, my father could not help adding to himself, "alias Lord Chesterfield and Lord Rokeby."

Another tap at the parlour door, and in stalked our godmother, Miss, or, as she was generally called, Mrs. Pritchard, a spinster as virtuous in reputation as Cato's daughter, and as towering above her sex, for she stood nearly six feet high without her cap. In features she rather countenanced the Rumbold practice, for though her upper lip was decidedly hairy she never shaved; but in her figure she inclined to the Titus Lacy persuasion, her waist was so very slender—whilst in her notions of the powers and duties of a sponsor, she

differed from both; mysteriously hinting that by some mystical spiritual connection with the twins, she became more their mother than their mother, who was simply their parent in the flesh, and as such only entitled to wash, feed, and clothe their bodies, or to whip them if naughtiness required. My mother, it may be supposed, did not greatly relish or approve of this doctrine: but the truth is, the unexpected refusal of a female friend, at the eleventh hour, had compelled her to accept the proffered sponsorship of Mrs. Pritchard, in spite of that lady's former declaration, that if she did become a religious surety, she would not be a nominal one, but fulfil her vows and act up to the character: the nature of which character she painted during breakfast in such colours, that, as Uncle Rumbold whispered to my father, "she promised to make a devil of a godmother!"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CHRISTENING.

My mother was out in her forebodings. By the time that breakfast was over, the ragged dirty-looking clouds had skulked off, and the tall poplar over the way shot up into a clear blue sky. The narrow strip of river that was visible above the grassy bank glittered like a stream of molten gold; and the miller's pigeons, a sure sign of settled weather, were flying in lofty circles in the sunny air, casting happy glances, no doubt, at the earth beneath and the heaven above, instead of a steak under and a crust over them.

Even the little shabby boys who kept jumping over the post on the near side of the road, evidently reckoned on "Set Fair," for while many of them were without hat or cap,

and some had no coat, great or small, none had brought umbrellas—few had even water-proof shoes on their feet, much less clogs. A great comfort and relief it was, the said solitary post, to the young expectants, most of whom had to wait a couple of hours more or less, before the glass-coach driven by one man and a nosegay, and drawn by a pair of horses and two peonies, pulled up at the Doctor's door.

The mob in the mean time greatly increased, for a rumour of the bearded godfather, exaggerated, as the tale travelled, into the Grand Turk and the Great Mogul, had flown throughout the parish, so that when the gentlemen—who preferred to walk to the church—issued from the house, it was through an avenue planted with men, women, and children, six deep, and amidst a cheer which only the united Charity Schools, of both sexes, could have composed.

"Huzza!" they shouted,—"Moses for ever!—Huzza! for the Great Mogul!" with other cries which our eccentric uncle would fain have loitered to enjoy and retort, but for the hauling at one arm of Mr. Titus Lacy, who was disgusted with the familiarity of the lower orders, and the dragging on the other side of my father, anxious to be in good time. But the mob was not to be shaken off or left behind any more than the swarming flies that encircle a horse's head. Even so, a buzzing cluster of satellites, male and female, old, middle-aged, and young, kept running, shuffling, trotting, behind, beside, and before the persecuted trio, whom, with a suffocating cloud of dust, they accompanied along the road, through the churchyard, and up the yew-tree avenue to the ancient porch, where an offcast of the curious but less active inhabitants, the lame, the infirm, and the indolent, awaited their arrival.

Thanks to this diversion, the glass-coach followed with a smaller escort, yet not so few but that there was constantly

at each window the bobbing head of some long-legged lad or lass snatching peeps, by running jumps, at my mother and godmother, in full dress, sitting bolt upright on the back seat, and on the front one Mrs. Prideaux and Kezia, both in their best, and each holding a remarkably fine twin in her arms or on her lap. But it was otherwise when the females alighted at the churchyard gate and walked up the avenue, where the minority joined the majority of the mob. Then all the clamour was renewed. "Huzza! Old Close! Long-beard for ever! Huzza for the Great Mogul! Who's lost his Billy Goat?" with other cries more or less jocose, and some hostile ones, indicative, alas! of my poor father's declining popularity.

"Who frightened Sally Warner into fits?" screamed a gawky girl, pointing with her coarse red finger at Kezia.

"And who wanted to 'natomize her?" bawled an old lame woman, shaking her crutch at the Doctor.

"And won't sell opie!" grumbled a surly-looking labourer.

"And prescribed a child to sleep with a sick monkey!" cried a woman with a green shade over her eyes.

"And a parish burying for our poor Sukey!" muttered a tall man with a black hatband on his brown hat.

"And begrudged us our Godsend!" murmured a woman in rusty mourning.

"That is untrue at any rate," said my father to himself, and with the serenity of a good man conscious of the rectitude of his intentions, he stepped smilingly into the church, where the curate was waiting, and the whole party being assembled the baptismal ceremony immediately began. And for a time the service proceeded with due decorum, till about the middle of it, when the clergyman had to demand, "Dost thou in the name of this child renounce the Devil and all his works?"

"I do," shouted a voice from one of the pews, "and all the sinful lusts of the flesh."

Every eye instantly turned in the direction of the sound, and at once recognised a well-known face, with its mouth sucking at a forefinger just clapped into it.

It was Catechism Jack—who had been betrayed by a familiar phrase in the service into one of his old responses.

The curate paused, and made a signal to the beadle, who proceeded to eject the unlucky respondent from the church —not without an altercation and a struggle, for Jack pleaded piteously to be allowed to see the christening, and even clung to the pew-door, from which at length he was wrenched, with a crash and a jingle of broken glass, whilst a powerful and disagreeable odour quickly diffused itself throughout the building.

"There goes a whole basketful of physic," said my father *sotto voce* to himself.

"So much the better," said Uncle Rumbold, in the same suppressed tone. "Trust to nature."

"O! I shall die! I shall swoon away!" murmured my mother, showing a strong inclination to go into a fit on the spot, but the hysterical passion was scared away by a stern emphatic whisper from Mrs. Pritchard.

"Don't faint HERE!" and then turning to the curate and pointing with her long bony forefinger to the font, she added aloud: "I object, sir, to that consecrated element being used for reviving!"

The protest, however, was unnecessary, for my mother recovered without any relief from water, save what stood in her own eyes; and order being restored, the ceremony proceeded to the end without interruption, or anything extraordinary—except that at the final exhortation, when every one else was standing up according to the printed direction,

Kezia was observed on her knees, evidently offering up a private extempore prayer—a departure from the orthodox rite which incurred a severe rebuke from Mrs. Pritchard, the moment the curate had pronounced the last syllable of the service.

"Well," said Kezia, mistaking the drift of a lecture that insisted on a strict observance of the ceremonials, "and if I did kneel down without a cassock——" she meant a hassock.

"But you were putting up a heterodox petition of your own framing," interrupted the angry spinster.

"Well, I own I was," answered Kezia; "for the two dear little lively members just admitted into the church. And where's the harm if it did proceed from my own heart and soul, instead of the Common Prayer Book?—It was religiously composed, and I do hope," she added, unconsciously adopting the language of her bakery, "I do hope and trust it won't rise the worse for being home-made."

Here the controversy dropped; and the usual entries and signatures having been made in the vestry, the family party re-issued from the porch, saluted by the same cries as before, along the yew-tree avenue, and through the churchyard gate, where the majority of the mob dispersed in different directions, so that the Great Mogul and the glass coach were followed by only the idlest of the boys and girls, and of those one or two dropped off in every dozen yards.

The moment my father reached home he hurried into the surgery, and related to Mr. Postle what had occurred in the church with the medicine and Catechism Jack.

"I knew it! Say I told you so!" exclaimed Mr. Postle. "What else could come of entrusting the basket practice to an idiot! But of course, sir, you will discharge him directly."

"Certainly," replied my father, his good sense imme-

diately recognising the policy of the measure, but his humanity as promptly suggesting a loophôle for evasion. "Yes, he shall be discharged on the spot—that is to say, should the beadle be dismissed, for from what I saw of the scuffle, he had quite as much to do with the downfal of the basket as poor Jack."

By a curious coincidence, whilst Mr. Postle in the surgery was thus advising my father to send away the footboy, Mrs. Pritchard in the parlour was recommending to my mother a month's warning for Kezia, and with a similar result.

"Why, she does forget her own sphere dreadfully," said my mother; "and puts herself very forward in the parlour, and in the nursery, and even in the surgery, besides behaving very improperly and independently, as you say, ma'am, in the church.—Yes, I must and will part with her —at least as soon as I can find another like her, to do the work of three servants—and which I never shall."

CHAPTER XV.

THE SUPPER.

The clock struck nine.

As settled in domestic conclave, the dinner had been only a plain early meal, at which the two godfathers and the godmother were treated as three of the family, the grand festival in honour of the christening being reserved for the evening; and my mother, attended by Mrs. Pritchard, had just slipped from the drawing-room to inspect the preparations.

"Beautiful, isn't it?" she said, looking along the supper-

table, gay with flowers and lights, and brilliant with plate, of which there was an imposing display.

"Very genteel, indeed I might say elegant," replied Mrs. Pritchard, fixing her gaze especially on her own epergne. "And those silver branches, too, they are almost as handsome and massy as the Cobleys', and of the same pattern."

"Between you and me," said my mother, "they *are* the Cobleys'; and the tankard, you know, is Mr. Ruffy's, a present from one of his rich clients."

"And those silver-gilt salts are the curate's, I believe," said Mrs. Pritchard, "a parting gift from his late flock?"

"I believe it was," said my mother.

"And the dessert-spoons," inquired the tall spinster, who had made the tour of the table; "all with different crests and initials—pray is that a new fashion?"

"They are the school spoons from Mrs. Trent's," said my mother, reddening. "But the knife-rests are our own."

"And if I may ask," said Mrs. Pritchard, "how many friends do you expect?"

"Why, all those who have lent plate, of course," replied my mother—"namely, the Curate, the Cobleys, the Ruffys, Mrs. Trent, and Mrs. Spinks."

"Who!" exclaimed Mrs. Pritchard, in a tone like the pitch-note of an Indian war-whoop.

"Why, she is rather unpleasant, to be sure," said my mother; "but that is her salver on the sideboard. Then there's Colonel Cropper of the Yeomanry, who is to come in his uniform, and the Squire has half promised to drop in—and if it hadn't been for that nasty little Brazilian Marmot—I ought to have said Marmoset—we might have hoped for the lady at the great house. Then there's Doctor Shackle, and the Biddles—and the Farrows—and young Fitch, altogether about fourteen or fifteen, besides ourselves."

"Just a nice number for a party," said Mrs. Pritchard, "if they all come."

"They are late, certainly, very late," replied my mother, her heart sinking like the barometer before a storm, at the mere suggestion of disappointments. "But hark! there is an arrival!" and with the tall spinster, she hurried into the drawing-room to receive her guest. It was the unpleasant Mrs. Spinks. Next came Dr. Shackle; and then, after a long interval, the wit of the neighbourhood, young Mr. Fitch, a personage against whom Uncle Rumbold instantly felt that violent antipathy which he invariably entertained towards a dandy, or, in the language of those days, a buck.

"I'm early, I'm afraid," said the wit, looking round at the circle of unoccupied chairs.

"Or like myself, a little behind the mode," said Doctor Shackle. "I forgot that nine o'clock with fashionable people means ten."

"Then we are to have a fashionable squeeze, I suppose," said young Fitch, "a rout as they call it—a regular cram?"

"Oh, no!" cried my mother, eagerly, "only a few, a very few friends, quite in a quiet way."

"About twenty," said Mrs. Pritchard.

"And there are only six come!" observed the unpleasant Mrs. Spinks, deliberately counting heads.

"Are you sure, my dear," inquired Mrs. Pritchard, "that your invitations were correctly dated?"

"O, quite!" replied my mother, "for I wrote all the notes myself, and to make sure had them delivered——"

"By Catechism Jack," said Doctor Shackle.

"No, indeed!" cried my mother, "but by a special messenger."

"Yes, a charity boy," said Mrs. Spinks. "And I know

personally that Mrs. Trent had her note; and so had the curate, and the Biddles."

"It is very odd," muttered my mother; "the Biddles were always early, and I made sure of Mrs. Treat. She ought indeed to have come to tea. It is very strange—very strange indeed!"

"Pooh! pooh!" said my father. "By and by they will all come in a lump; and if they don't we shall only be the snugger."

"And in the meantime," said young Fitch, "the great Bashaw there with the black beard will perhaps amuse us with one of his three *tails!*"

"I am sorry, young man," said Uncle Rumbold, in his gruffest voice, "that I am not a naval Bashaw, or I would amuse you with nine."

At this retort, delivered with the look and growl of an enraged lion, the abashed wit hastily retreated to a chair; and the little buzz of conversation which had sprung up, was hushed as by a clap of thunder. There was a pause—a long dead pause—and to make it more dreary, the family clock—an old-fashioned machine with stout works and a strong pulse—stood in the hall, so near the drawing-room door, that its tick! tack! was distinctly audible, like the distant hammering of endless nails into an eternal coffin. Tick! tack!—tick! tack! Oh! that monotonous beat,—only broken by a sudden "click!" like the cocking of a gigantic pistol, and which made every one start, as if Death had actually given warning instead of Time! And then, tick! tack! again,—till with an alarming preliminary buzz the clock struck ten. The odious Mrs. Spinks was the first to speak.

"Quite a quakers' meeting!"

But nobody replied to the remark. The wit continued

mute—the tall spinster merely looked wonderingly at my mother, who looked inquiringly at my father, who slightly shrugged his shoulders, and looked up at the ceiling. Mr. Titus Lacy was habitually taciturn, and Doctor Shackle only opened his lips in a sardonic smile.

At last, at a private signal from my mother, my father came and placed his ear to her mouth.

"For heaven's sake, George, do talk!—and get young Fitch to rattle—why don't he rattle?"

"The Bashaw killed him," whispered my father. "But I will do what I can." And by a desperate rally, he contrived to get up a brief conversation;—but the fates were against him. Doctor Shackle seemed determined to answer in monosyllables; and Uncle Rumbold's hobby, in spite of a dozen allusions to the light of nature, refused to be trotted out. At last my father's own spirit began to share in the general depression—the discourse, such as it was, again dropped, and then—tick! tack! tick! tack!—Oh! it was horrible!—the only sound, it seemed, in the wide world. Not a knock—not a ring! No one came—nobody sent an apology.—What on earth could be the matter! The clock struck eleven!

"I believe," said my mother in a faint voice, "we need not wait any longer."

"We have waited too long already," said Uncle Rumbold; "at least I have—and long to satisfy the cravings of nature."

"Give your arm, then, to Mrs. Pritchard," said my father—"Mr. Lacy will escort Mrs. Spinks; the Doctor will convey my wife, and I will take care of Fitch; and in this order the company, if company it might be called, marched, melancholy as a walking funeral, into the supper-room—joined, in their progress through the hall, by Mr. Postle.

My poor mother! A demon might have pitied her, as she

took her place, and cast a rueful look at my father at the bottom of the table, flanked on each side by six empty chairs. A fiend would have felt for Kezia, as she stood, death-pale, behind the back of Doctor Shackle, not from any partiality to that sneering personage, but that she might exchange looks and signs of wonder and grief with Mr. Postle, who sat opposite.

"A pity, isn't it?" said Mrs. Spinks across the table to Mrs. Pritchard; "such a beautiful supper!—enough for thirty—and only nine to sit down to it!"

"We must make up in mirth," said my father, "for our lack of numbers," and again he made a gallant but vain attempt to revive the spirits of his guests. Besides the common gloom, he had to contend with the animosity of Mr. Postle against Dr. Shackle, and the antipathy of Uncle Rumbold to Mr. Fitch. An unlucky joke hastened the catastrophe. The wit, emboldened by wine, had the temerity again to attack the Bashaw.

"Allow me," he said, "to recommend a little of this," at the same time thrusting a frothy spoonful of trifle as near as he dared to the redoubtable beard.

"Sir," said Uncle Rumbold, snatching up a full glass of ale, "if I consulted the law of retaliation—which is one of the laws of nature—in return for your lather, I should present you with this wash for the face. I say, I should be justified in so doing; but from respect to the present company I shall only drink to your better manners."

A momentary silence followed this rebuke; and then came a sound which startled all the company, but one, to their feet. As in pile-driving, there is a point beyond which the weight, called the monkey, cannot be screwed up; so there is a certain pitch at which human fortitude gives way,—and my mother's had reached that limit. The agitation, the

mortification, the mental agony she had so long suppressed, had at last overstrained her nerves, and with an involuntary scream, such as is said to come from persons who have swallowed prussic acid, she went into strong hysterics. My father and Kezia instantly hastened to her assistance, but to little effect; either the fit was so obstinate, or the patient.

"Nothing serious," said Dr. Shackle, "she will soon recover, and in the meantime her best place is bed."

The hint was taken; the company immediately broke up; and whilst my mother was carried up stairs to her chamber, her grand christening party—of two gentlemen and two ladies—unceremoniously departed.

"Only four out of twenty!" gasped Kezia to Mrs. Prideaux, whom she had dragged apart into a corner of the bedroom, "only four out of twenty!—What, in mercy's name, can it all mean!"

"The meaning is plain enough," answered the genteel nurse, in her calm sweet voice,—"your master is a ruined man."

CHAPTER XVI.

A MYSTERY.

Our family was in bed. My mother had sobbed herself to sleep; my father lay dreaming by her side; the twin infants were in their cradle; the whole house was quiet, excepting only the ticking of the old clock in the hall, the chirping of the cricket in the kitchen, and a dull intermitting sound from one of the upper bed-rooms, as if from somebody imitating through his nose the croaking of a frog in the fens.

The clock had struck one, and was about to strike again, when the door of the back attic opened, and Kezia stepping forth in her night clothes, and without any candle, walked deliberately down the stairs to the door of the room in the first floor appropriated to the nursery. Here for a moment she paused, the attraction within having overcome or diverted her original impulse; but her true errand speedily recurred to her, and descending the other flight, she crossed the hall, and entered the surgery, to the extreme alarm and astonishment of the two persons who were conversing therein.

The one was a female in a flannel wrapper, tied with green ribbon, and occupying the wooden arm-chair devoted to the accommodation of patients or impatients awaiting the making up of their prescriptions: the other, a strange man, with his hat on, was seated on the counter, whence, with his elbow resting on his knees, he stooped down towards his companion, his face close to hers, in earnest communion. At a glance he was what was called in the slang of those days a Blood or Buck; in the cant of our own times, a Swell. Cigars were not yet in vogue; or, to a certainty, he would have had one between his lips: but he wore his beaver with the rakish jaunty air still affected by gentlemen, and journeymen who conceive themselves superior in acuteness, spirit, and an extensive knowledge of life, to the rest of the world. His clothes were expensive and fashionable. Round his throat he wore a very fine white cravat, so ample that his neck seemed poulticed, the ends being tied in a large ostentatious bow. His coat was blue, with fancy gilt buttons, a deep turned-down collar, and lappels that for size might have served for ears to a Newfoundland dog. His waistcoat, of buff or primrose colour, was double-breasted, long in the waist, and flapped, with a black ribbon crossing it from the left shoulder to the gold-mounted quizzing-glass in the left-

hand pocket. His lower limbs were clad in grey stocking pantaloons, tight as skin, and cased up to the well-made calf in Hessian boots, but somewhat deficient in polish, and minus one tassel. His coat, too, had the fluffy tumbled appearance of having occasionally taken its own nap with its master's on a feather-bed, or one of flock; his waistcoat was ill-washed; his pantaloons were soiled in sundry parts, and especially at the knees; and his cravat, besides its dingy hue, was wrinkled and flaccid. Altogether, there was as much of the sloven as of the beau in his costume—in his physiognomy, a corresponding mixture of the gentleman and the reprobate. His face was handsome; but had the faded, jaded look consequent on habitual debauchery. His large dark eyes were dry and bloodshot, with crowfoot wrinkles at the corners; and under each organ a flabby bag, as if for secreting the tears to be shed in the maudlin stage of intoxication. His cheeks were of a dull white, blotched with yellow and red, that deepened in his prominent nose to a crimson. His lips were parched and cracked; his chin was neutral-tinted by a bluish beard of two days' growth; and his long black hair and whiskers were foul and matted. Smart and slovenly; well featured, but with a sinister expression; dashing, but dirty; unbrushed, unwashed, uncombed, unshorn, he looked the rake, with a strong spice of the ruffian, whose attribute, a thick knotted bludgeon, lay handy beside him on the counter. On the other side, stood something of indefinite shape tied up in a cotton shawl; and near the bundle, the nursery rushlight, and an empty rummer, with a silver spoon in it. There could hardly be a greater contrast than between the female in the arm-chair and her nocturnal visitor; and yet the time, the scene, and the manner of their tête-à-tête, inferred the most confidential and familiar intercourse. Was it possible that the repulsive,

dissolute, villainous-looking man on the counter, was anything near or dear to the genteel, sweet-spoken, well-bred, lady-like Mrs. Prideaux?

To confirm and justify an affirmative answer, certain chronological characteristics must be taken into consideration. In these, our own times, so remarkable for a refined taste in art and literature, in manners and morals, the Court Calendar possesses more attractions for females than the Newgate one. There is no longer a rage for genteel highwaymen or eminent housebreakers. As pets, Brazilian monkeys are preferred to malefactors, and parrots to jail birds. Our mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters no longer admire the chivalrous courage of a horse-pad, whose utmost deed of daring—the presentment of a loaded pistol at an unarmed man—has been outdone by every light or heavy dragoon who has seen service. They no longer fall in love with a Knight of Roads for robbing them like a gentleman, and paying compliments to their beauty, and calming their feminine fears, at the cost of their purses, watches, brooches, bracelets, and finger-rings and ear-rings. A vulgar burglar, renowned for breaking into houses and out of prisons, is hardly reckoned on a par with the hero of successful sieges and sorties; or an obdurate ruffian who goes to the gallows with a bold face as a rival of the gallant veteran who leads a forlorn hope. A common murderer is no longer a lady-killer to boot; nor does a dashing pickpocket triumph in female preference over a plain honest man "innocent of stealing silver spoons." But it was otherwise formerly; when, in the current phrase, a daring felon became a darling fellow, and a precious rascal a charming rogue. It was then quite usual for ladies of rank and breeding, of family and fortune, to visit condemned criminals in Newgate—entwining with fair and noble arms the neck destined to an ignominious

rope,—beseeching keepsake locks from the head soon to be shrouded in an infamous night-cap; and hanging with aristocratical fondness on a plebeian body about to swing shamefully from Tyburn Tree.

Thus, as worn-out fashions descend, like cast-off clothes, from mistress to maid, the example set by a lady of quality in the time of the First George might very well be followed by a nurse in the reign of George the Third. However, robber or rake, there was the strange man, admitted, in the middle of the night, to a mysterious interview in the surgery, the door of which opened, round the corner of the house, into a lane.

At the entrance of Kezia the parties both started, and the man would have sprung up and spoken but for the warning of the nurse, who raised one hand with its fore-finger on her lips, whilst she held him down with the other. In truth, the figure of the housemaid in its white garments, obscurely seen by the dim gleam of the rushlight, was quite spectral enough to shake the courage of a dissolute man, with nerves unsettled by drink. His frame trembled, his face turned ashen pale, and his teeth chattered as he exclaimed in a hoarse whisper—

"A stiff-un walking—by G—d!"

The nurse with a dissenting shake of the head and her lips indicating a silent "No!" repeated her warning gesture to her companion, who, open-mouthed but breathless, watched with straining eyes every movement of the apparition. In the meantime Kezia, walking behind the counter, took her usual station beside the desk, but in silence, as if awaiting the leisure of her confidential adviser in all difficulties, Mr. Postle.

"All safe!" said the nurse in a very low but distinct whisper: "she's sleep-walking!"

The man, as if suddenly relieved of a pectoral spasm, immediately drew his breath in a long deep sigh, and set himself intensely to watch and listen to the sayings and doings of the somnambulist, who at length spoke.

"This is a dreadful mysterious business, Mr. Postle. Twenty invited, and only four to come! What can it all mean?" and she paused for a reply, which having dreamed, she resumed:—

"No, the night was not bad enough for that. Besides, the Cobleys have their own carriage, and so has the Colonel and the Squire, who would have brought the Curate along with him. Then the Biddles have the mule cart, and the Ruffys always hire a po-shay. As for Mrs. Trent and the rest, they don't mind wind and rain, but lap up and visit in all weathers. No,—it couldn't be that! And such a beautiful supper too! And such a splendid turkey—with a giver under one wing, and a lizard under the other—I should say quite the reverse. And then the sweets! I could have cried into hysterics myself, to see all the nice jellies, and creams, and custards, and nobody to eat them, for they *was* nice—if they did taste a little of the shop, as that odious Doctor Shackle said, meaning, I suppose, the almond flavour you was so kind as to oblige me with out of the surgery."

The imaginary Mr. Postle here probably vented an oath, for which she checked him.

"Yes, he certainly is malicious—but don't imprecate. It's profane, and forbid in Scripture. Swear not at all—no, not even at an enemy or a buzzum friend. To be sure, the Doctor was very sneering and provoking, and especially about the wine being good enough to need no bush except out of our own garden. I could have found in my heart to drop a blank mange on his medical head! And that foolish young Fitch, to affront Mr. Uncle Rumbold to his very beard, in-

stead of having a perfect haw of it, as any one would in their senses, it makes him look so like a conjurer. And then that abominable Mrs. Spinks as wouldn't let the thing drop, but kept counting the empty chairs and saying that every one had a banker's ghost in it—Banko's I should say—I declare she made the hair stand upright on my very head. Though for that matter, I would almost as soon have seen a ghost in every seat, and Scratching Fanny among them, rather than nobody at all! I never knew such a case afore—never, except once,—and that was at my first place."

The ideal assistant of course asked for the story.

"Why, the way was this. Master had come home with a prodigious wealth of money from foreign parts, and on setting up his establishment in London, determined to give a very grand party, by way of housewarming, to his neighbours. Well, the night came, with the rooms chalked for dancing, and all lighted up with wax candles and cut-glass chandeliers, and the most elegant supper set out, only for seventy people instead of twenty,—but nobody came. Nine o'clock, ten, eleven,—the same as at our own unfortunate regalia, but not a soul—not a knock or a ring, except the cook's cousin, the footman's sister, and the housemaid's brother and uncle—at least not till about twelve, when a single gentleman asked to speak with master in private, and then out it all came, for we listened at the study-door. Some spiteful person, in revenge for not being invited, had ferreted out master's secret history, and had whispered about in unanimous letters that he were a returned convert—I should have said convict—from Botany Bay. He had been there for some errors in youth, but had reformed himself, and got rich by opulence like Dick Whittington, and so got leave to come home again. But of course that don't apply to us, whom have never been arranged in court or transported, though fought as shy of

by society as if we had. What is your own notion of it, Mr. Postle?"

A long silence ensued, of which the nurse took advantage to whisper to her companion, whom she beckoned with her finger, and then pointed to the door. "She must not wake and see you. Come; but move cautiously—as quiet as death."

"Is this all?" asked the man in a low grumble, and with a motion of his head towards the bundle.

"It must serve for this turn," whispered the nurse. "Quick! and away!"

The fellow instantly slid gently down from the counter and clutched the bundle, whilst the nurse turned down the rushlight in the socket. Then there was a slight rustle, with the sound of two or three hasty kisses. The next moment the outer door was partially opened—a cool gust of air came inwards, as the dark figure of the man passed outwards—the door slowly closed again, and the fastenings were replaced with less noise than is made by a mouse. The nurse then groped to the counter, where she found her candlestick and the empty rummer, but not the spoon, a loss she instantly comprehended—the bundle had not quite served for the turn—but her equanimity was undisturbed; and cautiously feeling her way out of the surgery, she crept, silent as a spirit, up the stairs to the nursery, leaving Kezia to her dreaming conference with Mr. Postle.

"Yes," she said, "there is some dreadful misfortune hanging over us, no doubt. My poor dear master! Mrs. Prideaux foretells he is a ruinated man. But oh! Mr. Postle!"—and the tears oozed from her eyelids while she clasped her hands in earnest appeal to him—"whatever comes of it, don't let nothing tempt us two to leave and better ourselves, and forsake them, whose bread we eat, in their adversity.

For my part, I'm ready and willing to take a solemn religious oath on my bended knees"—and she suited the action to the word—"and trust you will do the same; never, never, never to give warning, nor take it neither, but to stand by the family and do for it to my last grasp,—namely, my poor dear master and missis, and them two lovely, helpless, innocent, twin babes!"

What promise the imaginary Mr. Postle made, and whether with the prescribed ceremony, is unknown; but it gave the liveliest satisfaction to the devoted maid of all work. The expression of her features was indeed invisible in the dark to human ken; but heaven, with its starry eyes, beheld her face shining with joy and gratitude.

"The Lord bless you, dear, dear Mr. Postle, for that comfort," she said, rising from her knees, and wiping her eyes with the sleeve of her only garment. "It's exactly my own feeling and sentiments. Yes, if I was courted at this very moment by twenty prostrated lovers at my feet, with bags of gould in one hand, and wows of constancy in the other, I wouldn't change my state, but refuse them all, and live single for the sake of the family—and which reminds me it's eight o'clock, and the breakfast to make."

So saying, led by that mysterious guidance which directs the somnambulist—whether some supernatural *clairvoyance*, or more probably an internal geographical scheme, corresponding with the external locality, and producing an exquisite consciousness by touch, independent of sight, of long familiar distances and habitual turns and windings—however, without blunder or collision, the sleeping Kezia passed hastily from the surgery, through the hall, into her kitchen, to prepare the morning meal to which she had referred. But here the guiding faculty was at fault. Besides the old furniture and utensils, on every article of which she could, blindfolded,

have laid her hand, the floor was occupied by sundry novel and strange contrivances for holding the superabundant relics of the festival overnight. Against one of these extempore dressers she walked, with a force and a clatter that startled her wide awake, with one hand in a jelly, and her nose seemingly testing the sweetness of a boiled ham. The darkness, the cold, her undress, and the remembrance of former nocturnal excursions, instantly suggested the truth; her mind, however, retaining no trace of her recent dream; so, after a single exclamation of surprise, she quietly groped for the tinder-box, lighted a spare candle, and yawning and shivering, crept up stairs to the back garret, to get a brief rest, before the very early hour at which she regularly resumed the multifarious labours of her industrious days.

CHAPTER XVII.

A CLUE.

In the surgery—so lately the scene of a double mystery, of a clandestine midnight meeting and unconscious somnambulism—of treacherous heartless vigilance and honest devotion faithful even in sleep—at his old desk stood Mr. Postle, apparently studying some medical work, but in reality thinking over the supper of the night before and puzzling himself to account for the absence of the guests. But his meditations were in vain: to use one of his own favourite illustrations, he might as well have tried to make a nosegay with Flowers of Sulphur.

Meanwhile, in looking at his old prompters, along the wall from shelf to shelf, with all the parade of nice-looking nastiness arranged thereon in rows of glass bottles and white jars,

marked with cabalistical signs—his eye detected one receptacle breaking the uniformity of the series by being turned with its label to the wall. But he did not need to see the gilt scroll to know its inscription—"Tinct. Opii."

"Confound that idiot!" he muttered. "He will poison himself yet with his sweet tooth and his tastings. I can trace the mark of his wet finger on the bottles and drawers like the track of a snail. Only yesterday I had to teach him that Ferrum Tart. does not stand for pastry, nor Cerat. Plumb. for almonds and raisins—and now he has been at the laudanum!"

For once, however, Catechism Jack was mistakenly accused. No finger of his, wet or dry, had approached the dangerous narcotic. Another meddler, rather sharp than dull of intellect, had removed the stopper for a less innocent purpose than to test the flavour of the tincture. The dear Twins owed their very sound sleep in the night to a minute dose from that displaced bottle.

The assistant carefully rectified its position, and returning to his desk began, with pen and ink, to sketch—another of his habits—on the quire of blotting-paper before him, his designs being generally of the anatomical class, outlines of bones, muscles, and organs, rarely deviating into landscape or rather into scraps of foliage, and even then what was meant for a tree resembled rather a drawing of the Vena Porta or Vena Cava, with its branching veins. This time, however, his subject was the human face, not dissected, but in its natural state; and as very commonly happens to artists, fine or unfine, the features took the form and expression of a countenance remotely present to his thoughts, so that without any premeditated portraiture, he had just achieved a rather striking but ugly likeness of Doctor Shackle, when a shadow fell across the paper, and looking

up, he beheld the original of the picture standing right before him.

The Doctor was accompanied by a Mr. Hix, a parish official, and a very active one—but especially notable for a double propensity to turn private business into public, and public business into private—at once an indefatigable meddler in, and advertiser of, the personal concerns of his neighbours, and the uniform advocate of select vestries, secret committees, private reports, sealed books, suppressed accounts, the exclusion of reporters, and closed doors. Indeed, so far did he carry this love of mystery that, when certain parochial notices were to be posted, according to law, for the benefit of the community at large, he was said to have seriously recommended their being pasted up with their printed sides to the wall.

The ostensible errand of Doctor Shackle was merely to ask, in a friendly way, after the heads of the family, and how they had passed the night after the trying disappointments they had endured: an inquiry urged with such seeming interest, that in the absence of any authentic bulletin, Mr. Postle deemed it expedient to fetch my father himself to reply personally to the application.

His back was no sooner turned, than Shackle, reaching his long arm over the low rail in front of the desk, snatched up something which he exhibited to his companion —namely, a fragment of French grey cloth in one hand, and in the open palm of the other two silver-washed nails. The pantomime that followed was silent, but expressive.

"*Do you see these, and understand what they mean?*" asked the fixed significant look of the Doctor, as plainly as in words.

"*I do,*" replied the intelligent nod of Mr. Hix.

The Doctor raised his eyebrows and shrugged his shoulders. "*Could there be a clearer case?*"

The Churchwarden shook his head and made a grimace. —"*Nor a more ugly business.*"

"I'm sorry for it—very!" said Shackle, hastily replacing the cloth and nails on the desk, and then suddenly turning his back on them, and fixing his eyes on a large glass jar full of snow-white magnesian bricks, as if projecting how to build with them some castle in the air. So intensely, indeed, was he occupied with this ideal fabric, as not to be aware of the entrance of my father, till the latter came close up to him, and shook him cordially by the hand. Then he awoke, and how delighted he was, or said he was, to find my father not merely as well but better than could have been expected, after the late untoward events —a series of disappointments borne, he must say, with an equanimity worthy of the palmy days of the Stoic Philosophy.

"Had it been my own case," said Shackle, "to say nothing of the dead convivial failure, yet to meet with such a slight from the whole neighbourhood, as it were—the cut wholesale as well as direct—I really think, with my own more sensitive, irritable temperament, I should either have gone there"—and he pointed to the laudanum bottle—"for oblivion, or there"—and he indicated another drug—"for annihilation."

"No, no," said my father, "you know better. And besides, there was no great stoicism needed in the matter. A medical man, and a Christian, who had walked the hospitals and the poor-house, and seen human misery and anguish in all their complicated shapes, and who could not bear such a petty mishap—provoking as I confess it was—would be a disgrace to his profession and his religion. As

to the absence of our friends, no doubt it will be accounted for."

"No doubt," said Doctor Shackle.

"For the rest," continued my father, "the worst we are threatened with is to be cloyed with sweets for a few days to come, or surfeited with cold victuals; evils for which between young folks and poor ones, we may easily find a remedy."

"I am glad to find you so well armed against trouble," said Doctor Shackle; "and wish I had a little of your philosophy. I have equal need of it—for we are likely to be mutually involved in a very disagreeable business."

"A parochial, and perhaps a public business," said Mr. Hix. My father looked inquiringly from one speaker to another.

"The short of the matter is this," said Doctor Shackle. "You have heard, of course, of the pauper family, who gave their dead child that ridiculous funeral?—"

"The Hobbeses," said Mr. Hix. "Indulged themselves with a genteel burial—and on our books for three shillings a week!"

"Yes, inconsistent enough," said my father. "I was accidentally an eye-witness of the procession."

"Well," said Shackle, "the grave was robbed the other night, and the child's body stolen. The whole village is in a ferment about it—the poor especially—the paupers outrageous, and the Hobbeses rampant."

"Poor things," said my father.

"Yes, poor enough," said Shackle; wilfully wresting my father's phrase of commiseration into another sense.

"And idle enough, and troublesome enough, and more than enough," added Mr. Hix.

"And scandalous enough," said Shackle, "to say that

their beggarly corpses are less cared for than the carcases of brute beasts."

"The coarse expression," said my father, "of a strong but natural prejudice."

"Oh, quite natural," sneered Doctor Shackle; "and quite harmless, if their prejudices went no farther. But, as human corpses are not eaten, except by ghouls, hyænas, and beasts of prey, of which there are none in this blessed Lincolnshire, the natural inference is that graves are robbed, and bodies snatched for other than pantry purposes. In short, in their own low language, that the poor are only poked into pit-holes, to be hoked up agin, and cut and hacked about like dog's meat, by raw 'prentices and Sawboneses,—and heaven knows what vulgar libels besides."

"Well, and what then?" asked my father. "As a surgeon, *you* are not going, I presume, to deny the practices of the resurrectionists, or the uses to which the articles they deal in are applied?"

"Not I," said Shackle. "The thing is too notorious; and, as you say, too surgical; though I never had, directly, a finger in any cold meat pie of the kind. Probably you have. However, the popular suspicion necessarily falls on the medical men of the place; under which category we share the odium between us: at least, pro tempore; for, as regards myself, as we doctors say, I shall very soon remove all that; and hope you are in as good case."

"Most decidedly," said my father.

"So much the better," said Shackle. "Your official connection with the poor, as parish doctor, makes your exculpation of even more importance than my own."

"There must be a parochial inquiry!" exclaimed Mr. Hix.

"Of course, with closed doors," said Shackle; unable to

resist a sarcasm, even on a friend and ally—a propensity that explained his otherwise unaccountable influence in a place where so few persons liked, but so many feared him.

"In fact," he continued, "the wretches do not scruple to say that the anatomising of their remains is winked at by the workhouse authorities."

"And if we did," cried Mr. Hix, "every ounce of flesh on their bones was composed of parish victuals. There isn't a pauper dies, man, woman, or child, but in equity we have a mortgage, as I may say, on their bodies."

"That's undeniable," said Shackle. "However, the paupers are all up in arms, and declare openly that they won't work; and even that they won't die, unless assured of decent and safe interment."

"Won't die!" exclaimed Mr. Hix.

"So they say," answered Shackle.

"Won't die!" repeated the churchwarden. "That must be looked to."

My father, who had been lost in thought, here awoke from his reverie, and addressed himself to Shackle.

"Yes, Doctor, you are right. This is a very disagreeable business, and a very serious one, at least for me."

"And for the parish too," said Mr. Hix, "to have such a slur on it."

"Especially," said Shackle, "as it is not a matter that can be shelved, or cushioned, or hushed up."

"And ought not to be," said my father, "must not! Last night's mystery is now solved. I am socially excommunicated. How or why, I know not,—but a suspicion has fallen upon me, which I must remove, or give up my practice, and quit the neighbourhood. A public inquiry will be necessary for my own sake."

"And for mine too," said Shackle.

"For all our sakes!" cried Mr. Hix. "The excitement of the lower orders will be sure to fall first on the authorities —the churchwardens and overseers. The least I expect is, to be hung or burnt in effigy, or to have my windows smashed!"

My father mechanically looked up over the surgery-door at the yellow glass globe, so often broken; and true to his misgivings, if not actually smashed, it was starred in all directions by some missile that had struck it in the centre. He pointed it out to his visitors.

"There is a token of the popular feeling—the local current that has set in against me. For some time past I have fancied myself treated with coldness and aversion by the humbler class of the inhabitants; but a clear conscience and my goodwill towards them repelled the supposition. Now, however, there is a direct imputation on me which I must at once rebut, or be a ruined man."

"The Board sits this morning," suggested Mr. Hix.

"In that case," said my father, "I will at once go before it, and clear my character. I need not say, I hope, that I am altogether innocent in the matter—as innocent as those leeches," and he pointed to the bottle—"of the blood of Julius Cæsar."

"I am truly happy to hear you say so," cried Shackle, seizing and squeezing my father's hand; "and shall be more happy to hear you prove it."

The churchwarden expressed a similar wish, but instead of shaking hands, contented himself with a stiff bow, externally taking a simple leave of my father, but internally bidding good-bye to him, though somewhat precociously, as the parish doctor. The real functionary, in his eyes, was the medical gentleman with whom he walked off arm in arm.

"A clue at last!" cried my father to Mr. Postle, whose

entrance into the surgery was synchronous with the exit of Doctor Shackle—a hint that Animal Magnetism ought properly to have two poles,—of repulsive Antipathy as well as of sympathetic Attraction. "A clue at last! We have found out the disease!" And my father imparted to his assistant the substance of the information he had just obtained.

"Say I told you so!" cried the assistant; an exclamation he would have made, however, if just informed of a shower of addled brains from the moon. "And that, then, is why we were sent last night to Coventry—to sup by ourselves! Not that they would have touched the supper if they had come—they would have fancied human brains in the blanc mange, and coagulated blood in the currant jelly. Yes—for the future we are ghouls, vampires, carrion vultures—and nobody will come near us. There is nothing that unscientific people are so squeamish about as violating graves and desecrating their remains—though why the suspicion should fall on us, more than on Doctor Shackle, he knows best. If any one wants a refresher in anatomy, he does. And what, sir, do you mean to do?"

"Confront the report," said my father. "Go before the Board and demand an inquiry. Is not that always the best course—to take the bull by the horns?"

"Perhaps so—except you're run at by a polled cow," answered Mr. Postle. "For my part I'd as soon go at once at Farmer Noake's bull with a board over his eyes, with 'beware' upon it. It's the Board, or a parcel of it, that wants to get you out, and have Shackle in your place."

"I don't—I can't—I won't believe it!" cried my father.

"As you please," said Mr. Postle. "If *they* don't, the paupers will, which comes to the same thing. I know them well: when the poor once catch a prejudice in their heads, it s as obstinate as ringworm. I lost my own practice by it

when I was a doctor on my own account. My patients were mostly provincials of the lower and middle class, but all brutally ignorant, and of course superstitious, and devout believers in witchcraft. And how do you think I lost them? By a joke,—sir, a mere joke—through telling a credulous old woman,—ass as I was!—that I could show her Mindererus's Spirit, dancing with Saint Vitus, round Saint Anthony's Fire!"

"But surely a jest," said my father, "might have been explained."

"Not it," said Mr. Postle. "To the vulgar, a doctor with his hieroglyphics on his bottles, and his Latin, is already half a conjuror, and I had made myself a necromancer outright. There was no revoking it. You may make an ignorant stomach give up its poison, but an ignorant faith never gives up a legend it has once swallowed."

"I should like to hear your definition of an ignorant stomach," said my father, straying, as he was too apt, from serious matters after a whim.

"We are likely to know practically," answered the assistant, in a gloomy tone, "if ignorance and emptiness be synonymous, as they are in the head; for I don't suppose, as the practice goes, that the Board will board us."

"That's true," said my father. "I must go to the workhouse." And with a smile at the unintentional equivoque, he put on his hat, and set out for the parochial meeting.

Had he delayed a minute longer, he would have been startled and stopped by a sound ringing in his own house from hall to attic,—that sudden shrill cry which only comes from a female in distress, anguish, or alarm,—and electrifies the hearer like a flash of lightning turned from visible into audible. As it flew first from the kitchen to the surgery close at hand, Mr. Postle was soonest at the spot, where,

close to the ironing-board, the moveable supports of which she had knocked away in her fall, lay Kezia in a strong hysterical fit, in the middle of a chaos of crockery, glasses, decanters, knives, forks, tongue, cold fowls, tarts, salad, cakes, and jellies,—amidst which she kicked and struggled like a passenger desperately swimming, or trying to swim, from the wreck of some well-provisioned steamer.

Having dashed into her face the first water at hand, the assistant stepped back into the surgery for the Sal. Vol. or Liq. Vol. C. C., but with so much professional deliberation—knowing such fits may be safely left to run their course—that when he returned to the kitchen, he found the patient propped up against the wall, in a sitting posture, between Mrs. Prideaux and Uncle Rumbold, the first loosening the sufferer's dress, and the last, having lent a hand in her removal, gazing calmly on, very like a bearded Turk confiding in Predestination, and still more like himself "trusting to Nature." Mr. Postle nevertheless plied the stimulants.

"One more application of the restoratives," said Mrs. Prideaux, "and she will revive. There!—she is resuming her senses."

As she spoke, the colour began to return to the claret-bald cheeks of Kezia, who, after a gasp or two, opened her eyes—sneezed—stared at each person in turn,—then suddenly turned pale again—closed her eyes—clasped her hands wildly together—and shrieking "the plate! the plate!" relapsed into insensibility.

The restorative process was again applied, and with success. The maid-of-all-work, after a short struggle, sprang up, as if galvanised, on her feet; and amidst gulps, sobs, broken ejaculations, and distracted gestures, informed her audience by bits and snatches that "there had been thieves in the house,—and Mr. Ruffy's silver tankard—and the Reverend

Curate's silver-gilt salts—and all Mrs. Trent's school spoons —were missing!"

Poor faithful, devoted Kezia! No hand had she in that felonious abstraction; and yet, for all her innocence, how fearfully within the range of suspicion, whilst Guilt stood by in comparative safety, without a tremor in her silvery voice, or a faltering in her correct carriage! Had some wakeful ear, startled by the unseasonable issuing of the housemaid from her bedroom, heard her descending the stairs, marked her passage from hall to surgery, from surgery to kitchen, and recognised, by listening, her voice in conversation though but with a shadow, and then her stealthy retreat before dawn to her own attic, she was in all human probability a lost, undone, ruined creature. Like other Somnambulists, who, in their nocturnal, unconscious wanderings, step, dream-led, on the narrow window-sill or perilous parapet, she had walked to the very verge of a moral precipice —would she keep her footing or fall?

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PARISH BOARD.

It was a sad journey, though a short one, for my father, from his home to the Workhouse. At every step he was painfully reminded of his position. In return for the ready smile and friendly greeting for everybody he met, he received only cold looks, and sullen or fierce replies. The very children, with whom he had been so popular, shrank from him inspired by the common prejudice: little heads, that used to nod to him, were immoveable on their shoulders; little faces, that used to brighten at his approach, were frowning their

aversion; not a few of the youngsters ran indoors as from the minister of a new Herod. And yet so innocent was he of the revolting act attributed to him, that he had yet to learn particulars which were known to almost every man, woman, and child in the place—that the grave of the little Hobbes had been re-opened; the removed earth being placed, as the practice was in such operations, in a sheet, so that the mould might all be returned to its place without leaving a vestige to tell the tale of disturbance; but the resurrectionists had been alarmed at their work, and had decamped with the corpse, leaving the clay in the sheet, at one side of the yawning void, and the shattered coffin on the other.

To add to this discomfort, when my father arrived at the Workhouse, a number of applicants for out-door relief were in waiting at the gate; a squalid group, including the ungrateful Mrs. Hopkins, the bitter Mrs. Pegge, with her green shade, and the old deaf cripple, with her crutch and her ear-trumpet. As several of these persons were his patients, he inquired as usual after their complaints; but his questions were met by a dogged silence, or rude answers; whilst the three shrews were loud in their revilings, the deaf woman screaming high above the rest.

"Yes, ax em, do, poor things! when they mean to go to the pit-hole. And much rest they'll get in it,—just earthed over at night, and dug out again afore morning; that's all we enjoy of our narrow homes! Well, you've snatched one at any rate—poor Sukey Hobbes! Aye, you may shake your head—you didn't do it,—not you,—nor she isn't you know where, with her bones surgically picked into a skeleton, to stand behind a green curtain in a glass case. But, mark my words,—she'll harut ye some day! She'll harnt ye in her little shrowd!"

My father rang the bell: the sliding panel in the gate

moved aside; and a hard red face looked through the grating; but the porter still delayed to withdraw the bolt. He was an officer whose duty it was to admit rags and tatters, and as a character was being torn to shreds outside, he resolved to afford time for the operation. So the vituperation went on.

"Yes, go in to the Board, and hush and huddle it up among ye! It was not body-snatching—oh no—poor paupers have not bodies, but only carcases like brute beasts, so it wasn't body-snatching at all! And if it was, who cares for the remains of the like of us? If we make away with ourselves, we're mangled and mammoked with stakes through our corpses; and if we die nateral, we're cut up like Haggerty and Holloway! Who did poor Sukey kill that she's to be made a 'natomy?—But murderers is dissected, and so is paupers!"

The gate here opened; and my father entered, bestowing on the porter a gentle rebuke, that was received with a sneer, and revenged by leaving the panel open, so that as the Doctor crossed the yard he received through the grating a parting salute.

"Take care of John Hobbes, that's all. If *he* comes nigh your body, he'll snatch it alive!"

With these sounds ringing in his ears, my father entered the Workhouse; not unmarked by sundry dingy paupers, who were in waiting as messengers, and nodded and winked to each other, but omitted the customary tokens of respect as he passed them in the passage. Not a creature seemed to recognise him but the master's dog.

My father, for all his virtues, was not a favourite with the Board. In those days of general prosperity, and under the Old Poor Law, the expenditure for the maintenance of paupers was in many parishes very liberal, in some lavish;

yet there were examples even then of a harsher spirit and sterner system; and in certain localities, the sole aim of the parochial authorities was to reduce the poor and their rates to the lowest possible pitch. In our own district especially, the management of the Workhouse had gradually fallen into the hands of rigid utilitarians and strict economists, who were continually seeking to discover that minimum of support on which human life can subsist; and their rules, by augmenting labour and diminishing food, had already brought their Work Tables and Dining Tables to proportions that would have astonished an upholsterer.

My father, from natural disposition, was ill-adapted to second such views; and was, in the opinion of the authorities, an expensive doctor: he was too apt to prescribe wine and a generous diet for very reduced patients; and to recommend extra comforts in clothing, and improvements in lodging the poor. Moreover, his evidence at inquests on defunct paupers was not always exactly what could have been wished; and in one case had tended directly to induce a verdict of "Died from Neglect." He was therefore no favourite with the Board, who, as Postle suspected, had secretly encouraged the establishment of a rival doctor, in whose private opinion the milk of human kindness, to say nothing of the cream of it, was a luxury to be reserved for the wealthy classes. With the poor, on the other hand, my father ought to have been popular: but his good intentions towards them were nullified by orders that were disobeyed, and recommendations that were disregarded: he was supposed, by some, to drink the wine that did not follow his prescription, and when it did, that *he* changed the Port into Elder, and the Sherry into Raisin. Thus he was associated with all sins of omission and commission; and as one of the Parochial Body, shared in the general odium that attached

to it. His kind manners indeed, his prompt attendance, tender treatment, and private charity, as far as his very limited means allowed, might have procured an exemption in his favour; but his decided opposition to the local and growing habit of opium taking, by the lower classes, had excited a discontent, sedulously fostered by the opposite practice and secret machinations of Shackle, into a dislike, which the imputed outrage in the churchyard had aggravated to abhorrence. And so—a Martyr Elect—my father entered the Board-room, and placed himself in one of the vacant seats at its long table.

The senior churchwarden, Mr. Peckover, was in the chair; supported on his right by Mr. Hix, who had lost no time in circulating the story of his visit to the Doctór's surgery, with the discovery of the scraps of French-grey cloth and the silver-washed nails—but ending with a recommendation to bury the matter in their own bosoms. There were present besides, Mr. Bearcroft the overseer, Mr. Poplitt the assistant overseer, Mr. Tally the vestry clerk, and a few more official gentlemen. The greater part of the business of the meeting had been already disposed of: several tenders had been accepted; a complaint against the Master and Matron, and another against the Porter, had been heard and dismissed; a retrenchment in the Dietary had been agreed to; and the last question, the better punishment of the refractory paupers, was under discussion. Bread and water and solitary confinement were soon decided on; and then came a pause. The Boardmen looked at each other, and at the Doctor, and then with one accord at the Chairman; who rose, coughed, stammered, and proceeded to lay before them a very disagreeable business—the desecration of the churchyard, the violation of a grave, and the abstraction of a corpse—according to popular rumour—by their own medical officer. The

gentlemen would no doubt recollect the remarkable funeral bestowed by one John Hobbes, a pauper on the parish books, on his deceased child, who was interred in an elegant coffin, covered with French-grey cloth, and richly ornamented with silver nails? It was her grave that had been disturbed; and her body which had been stolen for anatomical purposes. He thought, with his friend on the right, such a slur ought not to rest on the parish and its officers. The Doctor himself, he understood, wished for an immediate inquiry. It would have been more regular, no doubt, to have given notice, but as he was present for the purpose, the Board would perhaps dispense with the form, and hear what he had to say on the subject.

This course being assented to, my father rose, promptly yet embarrassed, for the old difficulty of proving a negative reduced his eloquence to little more than an assertion.

"All I can say is, gentlemen, that I am an innocent man. As for any guilty knowledge of this matter, it was only this very morning—within an hour ago—that I knew of any grave being robbed, or any body stolen; my informants being Mr. Hix, there, and Doctor Shackle."

"Yet it was pretty widely known last night, before your christening supper," observed Mr. Poplitt, who had been one of the uninvited.

"The surer proof of my having nothing to do with it," replied my father; "that I was behind the whole parish in the information. That I was suspected, nay, condemned, was indeed signified to me at the family festival just alluded to, in a very marked and painful matter—but it is only recently that I have become aware of the cause of that general desertion. On what grounds the charge is grounded it is impossible to divine; my long practical acquaintance with anatomy, in the schools and hospitals, and my professional

knowledge, vouched for by the most eminent surgeons of the day, place me beyond the need of such studies of the human subject; and if I did require any aid from dissection, my principles, publicly avowed, deprecate the exclusive application of the remains of the poor to purposes equally beneficial to the rich."

"That is true," said the vestry clerk. "I have heard the Doctor express that sentiment on various occasions."

"No doubt of it," said Mr. Poplitt; "but people's practice don't always square with their professions."

"Well, let me be judged by my practice then," said my father. "What have I ever done, as a medical man, that such a suspicion should fall on me rather than on any one else?"

"If you mean to glance at Doctor Shackle," said the chairman, "I myself can speak to his alibi; for he was in close attendance on my wife, who was confined on the night in question."

"I glanced at nobody, Mr. Chairman," replied my father; "nor have an aim beyond my own exculpation. I repeat, that I knew nothing of the affair till this morning; and if you will send for my assistant, Mr. Postle, he will confirm my statement."

"Mr. Postle!" exclaimed half a dozen voices.

"Phoo! Phoo! Doctor," said the chairman,—"You know better than that! In a little quiet bit of body-snatching for the surgery, assistant and accomplice are synonymous."

"So be it," said my father. "Postle had certainly quite as much to do with the matter as myself; and I was sound asleep in my own bed. But that rests, too, on domestic, and therefore, I presume, on questionable evidence."

"I think," said Mr. Poplitt, appealing to Mr. Hix, "you

told us something about some French-grey cloth and silver headed nails that were seen in the Doctor's surgery?"

"I did," replied Mr. Hix, looking rather confused; "but on the understanding that the communication was to be suppressed as strictly confidential."

"There is no need of suppression," cried my father; "the articles were taken from my basket-boy, Catechism Jack, who is weak of intellect, and had childishly adorned himself with them on the morning of the christening."

"A likely story!" mumbled Mr. Hix, in a tone between publishing and smothering the remark.

"And pray, Doctor, how did *your* boy become possessed of the cloth and nails?" inquired Mr. Poplitt.

My father was silent: he could not form the remotest guess; for he was still ignorant that the coffin had been left above ground by the marauders.

"Why, of course," suggested the vestry clerk, "the boy picked up the things in the churchyard——"

"Yes, when he were there delivering their sleeping draughts to the dead folks," said Mr. Bearcroft, the overseer, with a grim smile. Mr. Hix bestowed an approving nod on the overseer, and Mr. Poplitt cast a sneer at the vestry clerk.

"Perhaps," said a little withered man with a pigtail, an Auditor and Trustee, "we had better send for the lad and examine him?"

"It would be to no purpose!" exclaimed my father. "The poor creature is so timorous that, if seriously interrogated, he would recur to his old lapse, and nothing would be got out of him, except that he would be a good boy, and say his Catechism, and not tumble down stairs. However, gentlemen, the suspicion attached to that cloth and those nails extorts from me a confession which nothing else should

have induced me to make"—and my father blushed, as if about to plead guilty to the charge against him.

Now then it was coming! Mr. Hix nudged his neighbour, and the overseer winked across the table at Mr. Poplitt.

"It was I, gentlemen," resumed my father, in a faltering tone, "who supplied the Hobbeses with the means for that preposterous funeral."

The Boardmen looked at each other, and interchanged signals of various import: brow-raisings of wonder, head-shakings of disbelief, and shrugs of doubt.

"If you mean the money chucked in at the Hobbes's door or window," said Mr. Poplitt, "that gift has generally been attributed to Doctor Shackle."

"Universally so," said Mr. Hix.

"And might be still," replied my father, "if nothing but common humanity were in question. I trust the Doctor is as capable as I am of feeling for a bereaved father and mother. The deed is only claimed, because it tends directly to contradict the charge that has fallen upon me. Were I capable," and the speaker's eyes filled with tears as he recalled the poor dead child, with her flowers and toys about her, as he had seen through the cottage window—"were I capable of robbing a churchyard, *that* little grave would have been the very last on earth I should have dreamed of violating!"

This speech, emphatically delivered, with the air and tone of the deepest feeling, caused a visible sensation amongst the auditors: several seemed affected, and one or two looked foolish, the only softness of which they were capable; but the impression was transient.

"Why, as to that," said the burly overseer, "if the trick had been cleverly done, the father and mother would have been never the wiser, while the purse, may be, you considered in the light of purchase-money, like, for the body."

My father's face flushed, his eyes glistened, his lips quivered, and he was about to start up for some angry explosion, when the vestry clerk laid his hand on his arm, held him down, and rose in his stead.

"Mr. Chairman, allow me to propose that this business be dropped. There is much more mystery about it than we can hope to unravel, except by course of time. As yet, we are all in the dark, and where there is a doubt we are bound to give the benefit of it to the accused, and to suppose him innocent, as in this case I honestly believe he is."

Mr. Hix, Mr. Poplitt, and Mr. Bearcroft, rose together; but the loud voice of the big overseer soon found itself in possession of the air.

"The benefit of the doubt! Aye, that's very well for a legal friction, I should say fiction—but what's to benefit us, the parochial authorities, if we connive at such doings to dead paupers, surrounded as we are by such a vast proportion of live ones, and uncommon audacious and refractory? Their excitement is awful."

"They will easily be pacified," said the vestry clerk. "Post a few handbills with a reward for the discovery of the offender——"

"When we have discovered him gratis!" growled Mr. Bearcroft. "Not a shilling, sir, not a shilling! The parish funds are not to be rewarded away in any such manner. The offender is before us, and his guilt or innocence ought to be established at once."

"By all means!" exclaimed my father:—"it is for that purpose that I am here,—that every equivocal circumstance may be explained away or contradicted, before I visit another parish patient, or set my foot again in the Infirmary."

"I believe that is the general feeling of the Board," said the chairman, stooping sideways to receive the communi-

cation which Mr. Hix was whispering into his ear. "We will come therefore to the point. Perhaps, Doctor, you can tell us the mark or marks on your family linen?"

My father started, and stared at what seemed so strangely irrelevant a question; but to a repetition of it, replied that he presumed the marks would be the initials of himself and wife, or G. E. B. with the number.

"And in what colour?"

"Either red or blue—red to the best of my recollection."

The chairman made a signal to a subordinate official who was in attendance, and delivered his order.

"Budge, produce the sheet to the Board."

Budge immediately proceeded to a cupboard in one corner of the room, and unlocking it, drew forth a large strong sheet, soiled with clay, which he laid on the table, when it was eagerly inspected by the Boardmen,—and alas! there were the fatal signs G. E. B. No. 4., worked with red marking cotton in one corner!

The vestry clerk having satisfied himself of the fact by ocular inspection, sank back into his chair, violently striking the Minute Book before him with his open hand.

My father was petrified!

"In that cloth, gentlemen," said the chairman, "the earth was deposited, which had been taken out of the grave, with a view to its being all returned to its place. The discovery of the robbery was made by the sexton, who reported it to me, and by my orders brought away the sheet, which has remained in the possession of Budge, under lock and key, ever since."

"A clear case! palpable! undeniable! a clencher! a settler!" resounded from different quarters of the room.

"Doctor," asked the vestry clerk, in an aside tone, "do you employ a laundress?"

"No," replied my father, with a sorrowful shake of the head, for he understood the drift of the question. "The washing is all done at home."

The Chairman, Mr. Hix, Mr. Bearcroft, and Mr. Poplitt, were busily writing on strips of paper, which they passed across the table to each other. To judge by their looks and signals, the communications were generally approved; and some secret resolution having been passed by a succession of affirmative nods, they bent their eyes on the Doctor. He was gazing on vacancy, as a man gazes who seeks at once to comprehend the past, the present, and the future.

"Yes," he said, speaking half aloud to himself, "that sheet is certainly mine, though how it was obtained for such a purpose is an impenetrable mystery. I cannot pretend to fathom it. Time and Providence some day may clear it up—but now, and from me, an explanation is impossible. Gentlemen!" here he raised his voice; "you MUST think me guilty. The presumption is too strong against me,—the current of circumstances too violent to be stemmed by a simple though solemn denial. Hereafter the dark cloud that is hanging over me may disperse; and its shadow that now blackens me so deeply may pass away. In the mean time there is but one course for me to pursue. I cannot—I feel that I cannot—remain your medical officer any longer. The place is vacant. I will send my formal resignation as soon as I get home."

There was a dead silence of assent: nobody said "Stop!—consider—take time!"

My father rose, and bowed to the chairman, and the Board, and made a movement to shake hands with the vestry clerk, but observing no sign of encouragement, bowed to him too, and hurried out of the room.

The pauper messengers, who had learned the whole business

by relays of listeners, made jeering comments as he passed through their lounging place—the Matron, whom he encountered in the passage, read in his face ere she arose from her curtsey, that he was disgraced, skipped aside into her parlour, and shut the door. Only the Master's dog still recognised him with his old salutes, and trotting across the forecourt with him, licked his hand for the last time. The hard red-faced porter, the moment the Doctor emerged from the workhouse, had set the gate as wide open as it would swing; my father passed through it, and it closed with a loud slam.

Perhaps in the whole course of his days his heart had never felt so heavy as it weighed on his way home. In his progress to the Workhouse, he had been shocked and grieved by the frequent manifestations of dislike, and the sad change he had suffered in the golden opinions of all sorts of people; but on his return, the same tokens were embittered by tormenting reflections of more domestic interest. His prospects in life, within the last hour, had altered materially for the worse; and particularly resembled a natural one that was often before him—the Fens, on a bad day. The situation of Parish Doctor was attended, indeed, with little direct emolument. The fees were calculated on a scale that only allowed for moderate morbuses, reasonable rheumatisms, cheap agues, and very low fevers; and afforded little profit to a conscientious practitioner, who was not content, in treating a sick pauper, to do it very well for the price. But the parochial connection was valuable: and by his secession from the Board, he would lose as patients the churchwardens and overseers, their spouses and children. In short, he saw before him, very distinctly, a Wife, two dear Twins, and a household to support, but no clear prospect of that indispensable requisite, a livelihood.

CHAPTER XIX.

Amongst the minor difficulties of our perplexing family affairs, none was more puzzling than the communication of the robbery, or breaking the plate as Kezia called it, to my mother. She had slept all through the alarm of the discovery, and had risen, and was about to come down, quite unconscious that Fate, which had mixed up such a black dose for her over night, had prepared another bitter draught for her in the morning. That the revelation would kill her poor mistress stone dead on the spot like a thunderbolt was broadly predicted by the weeping maid-of-all-work. Mrs. Prideaux anticipated that a very hysterical tendency might bring on a succession of fainting fits, and Mr. Postle compared the disclosure to imparting a blow to a packet of fulminating mercury.

At last Uncle Rumbold, in virtue parhaps of his likeness to a philosopher, undertook to deliver the evil tidings, and after some reflection determined to do it at the late breakfast which in my father's absence he was to enjoy *tête-à-tête* with my mother.

The task nevertheless was a nervous one for an inexperienced bachelor. A dozen times he stopped short in his meal, and clutching his beard in his hand—a trick he had in any case of perplexity—fixed his large speculative eyes on the face before him, asking himself will she scream? or go off in a fit? will her tea go the wrong way? will she choke with her muffin? or jump up and knock over the tea-urn? If she did not wear ligatures, thought he, I would not mind; but a woman wears so many bands and ties and laces, that when nature attempts a gallop in her veins she bursts a blood-vessel.

All this while he was eating an egg, out of which, all at once plucking the spoon he held it up, in a line with my mother's nose, and very solemnly exclaimed,

"Egad! my little fellow, it is well you did not go too!"

This opening however was a failure; my mother thought that the spoon had merely escaped being swallowed with one of those very large mouthfuls of food which her brother was in the habit of bolting. He therefore tried another tack; and began, in his oratorical tone, as follows:

"In former times, sister, there was a certain sect of philosophers who professed to endure the severest pain with the most perfect indifference."

"Yes," said my mother, "they swallowed melted lead, and washed their hands in boiling oil, and carried about red-hot pokers by the red ends, and allowed any of the company to satisfy themselves that the things were actually burning and scalding hot."

"I alluded to the Stoics," said Uncle Rumbold.

"And so did I," said my mother.

"Humph!" said Uncle Rumbold. "However, that was the Stoic doctrine; and the young Spartans were brought up in its principles. You remember the story of the Spartan boy who had a stolen fox under his cloak, and allowed the animal to gnaw away his bowels, rather than betray himself by crying out?"

"Ah! I see," said my mother, closing her eyes, and shuddering. "You want your two nevies to be brought up like young Stoics and Spartans—but what I call hardened little wretches."

"I was not thinking of my nephews at all," replied Uncle Rumbold. "In referring to the Stoic philosophy, what I wanted, sister, was to incite you to summon up your own fortitude."

"Then why did you not say so at once?" said my mother. "Is there any thing the matter?"

"Of course there is," replied Uncle Rumbold, "or what occasion would there be for the Spartan virtue? But before you hear it, let me recommend to you to finish your breakfast."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed my mother, pushing away the tea, and toast, and egg, to which she had helped herself "as if I could eat, with my heart in my mouth! I do wish you had kept it till George's return. He has ten times more fortitude than I have,—indeed it sometimes amounts to apathy. With his example before me, I might bear up against what might tempt me to stick myself with a breakfast-knife, or to run out and fling myself in the river."

"Well, I will wait," said Uncle Rumbold, "for my brother-in-law's return."

"O no, no, no," cried my mother; "I must hear it now. If there is one thing I cannot bear, it is suspense. Dear me! What can it be? Is it anything more about my poor supper party?"

"No," said Uncle Rumbold. "Though the origin of that cut by the neighbourhood, as I have just learned from Mr. Pestle—or Postle—is an awkward affair too. In short, sister—but you must first solemnly promise me not to shriek, or faint away, or do yourself any mischief, or tip over the urn——"

"I won't! I won't!" reiterated my mother.

"Well then, the silver plate ——"

"The plate! I knew it was the plate!" exclaimed my mother, with difficulty suppressing the forbidden scream. But she had not promised anything about the bell, so she jumped up, and tugged at it till one bell-rope gave way with

its blue and yellow rosette, and then she began jerking at the other.

Kezia answered the summons,—pale as a ghost.

"The plate—where's the plate?"

The maid-of-all-work wrung her hands, and looked piteously at Uncle Rumbold.

"Where's the plate, I say?"

Poor Kezia dropped on her knees, with a *plump* that would have split any pans but those common brown ones, so hardened by frequent scrubbing, and with uncouth gesticulations referred her mistress to the gentleman with the beard.

"The truth is, sister," said Uncle Rumbold, "the plate —which was all borrowed, I believe—has been fetched away in the night; but whether by the right parties is very doubtful."

"Thieves!—robbers!" gasped Kezia, in a hoarse whisper.

My mother had heard enough. Without speaking she went and threw herself at full length on the horse-hair sofa; whither Kezia, by a mode of progression familiar to housemaids that scour, shuffled after her on her knees. Uncle Rumbold, in the meantime, deliberately drew out his gold watch and gravely laid it on the breakfast cloth before him, determined to allow sorrow exactly five minutes of uninterrupted indulgence before he and comfort interposed.

Such was precisely the position of the parties in the parlour—the door of which Kezia had left open—when my father quietly entered!

If a domestic man is especially to be pitied, it is when after the rebuffs, conflicts, defeats, disappointments, affronts, losses, and crosses, he has encountered abroad in his business, he returns baffled, tired, disgusted, dejected, to be indemnified by the comforts of home—and finds it desolate—that

whilst the reptiles of that foul hag Adversity had been stinging, biting, hissing, and spitting at him in his path out of doors, others of the same malignant brood had been spawning and hatching on the household hearth. That was precisely my father's case. He stood wonder and thunder struck—looking from Uncle Rumbold to Kezia, and from her to my Mother, on the sofa, trying vainly to catch the purport of her broken exclamations.

"Brother-in-law—Kezia—Wife—what is the meaning of this?"

At the sound of his voice, my mother exchanged her recumbent for a sitting position, and began incoherently to inform him of the catastrophe.

"O George, George—we are ruined at last! We can never hold up our heads again in the place—never, never, never! What the curate will say—and what Mr. Ruffy may do, for he's a lawyer—and then that horrid Mrs. Spinks ——."

"She had hern, ma'am!—she had hern!" cried Kezia—"for she carried it away under her shawl!"

"Thank Heaven for that!" exclaimed my mother, with extraordinary fervour. "*She* can't ride then on our necks!"

"In the name of common sense," said my father, appealing to his brother-in-law, "what is all this about?"

"Why, the house has been robbed," answered Uncle Rumbold, "and the plate carried off."

In making this abrupt communication, the Philosopher had reckoned on the cheerful, manly, and generally sanguine disposition of my father, whom he was surprised therefore to see turn pale and stagger into a seat. But the Doctor's spirits were unusually jaded and depressed by the trial they had so recently undergone, and made him keenly sensible of a loss, which he felt bound to make good; but yet

knew to be an impracticable obligation, in the present hopeless posture of his affairs.

"Yes, it really is a heavy trouble, isn't it, George?" said my mother. "No wonder I felt it deeply, when you take it to heart so seriously. But what is to be done?"

"Oughtn't we to raise the hue and cry, and print handbills, and offer a reward for the stolen plate?"

"Turned into white soup by this time!" said Uncle Rumbold. "Melted down almost into a state of nature. All we can do is to report the robbery to the next magistrate, and leave him and his myrmidons to find the thieves, if they can. As the Doctor is tired, and may be wanted, I will step down myself to his Worship: but before I go, I should like to know, brother-in-law, the upshot of the body-snatching story of which Mr. Pestle or Postle has given me the heads —and the result of your visit to the Board."

"The result is simply," said my father, "that I am no longer the Parish Doctor."

At this announcement, there was a general expression of surprise, the exclamatory "We an't!" of Kezia ringing high above all.

"But how, George?"

"On what grounds, brother-in-law?"

"To be candid," said my father, "though some of the members of the Board were less friendly than I expected, they had sufficient grounds, founded on circumstantial evidence, to go upon—that the mould cast out of the poor child's grave was deposited in one of my own sheets."

"One of our own sheets!" screamed my mother.

"Our sheets!" echoed Kezia.

"Yes; I saw it produced," said my father. "It was marked G. E. B. No. 4. with red cotton."

The description was no sooner complete, than, after a col-

lision that made our bearded Uncle reel like a classic Bacchanalian, Kezia dashed out of the parlour, and was heard racing up the stairs at a horse-gallop.

"We shall soon know if any of the linen is deficient," said my mother. "For Kizzy is very careful of it, and that it is worn fairly, turn and turn about."

"I wish she had been more careful of the plate," growled Uncle Rumbold, "instead of trusting to country fastenings —a thin deal shutter, and a strong oaken bar."

"Did the thieves break in, then, at the kitchen window?" asked my father.

"If they broke in anywhere," muttered Uncle Rumbold, "which his Worship's two-legged ferrets must determine;" and our godfather was setting out on that errand, when he was delayed by the return of Kezia, with the result of her search on her lips and in her face. The household linen was all correct, with the exception of the identical sheet in question, which was missing, though she remembered marking it, as described, with her own hands. Our godfather immediately left the room, and the next minute his bearded profile, surmounted by a very broad-brimmed hat, was seen to pass above the blind of the parlour window.

My father and mother, released from the restraint which all persons felt, more or less, in the presence of our strange uncle, immediately became confidential; the first relating what had taken place at the Workhouse, and the last commenting bitterly on a mass of trouble, not spreading itself fairly like a flood on the Flats, but discharging itself, like a terrific waterspout she had lately read of in the county paper, on one devoted house and family.

Kezia, meanwhile, repaired to her old post beside the desk in the surgery, to derive comfort and counsel from Mr. Postle; and was about to reveal to him the mysterious dis-

appearance of the fatal sheet, when she perceived that a very little woman, with a straw-coloured face, was shivering in the patient's chair. The influence of old habits instantly took possession of her.

"Ah! a case for chinchony. My good woman, you've got the ha-gue, and I should say the stertian. You must take bark; and the best form is in canine pills."

"No, no," said the woman; "I'm weary of that old dose. I've took bark enough to turn me into a holler tree. But I'm not come about myself, but my sister, who is troubled about her legs—she has such very coarse veins."

"Has she any occasion to be showing her legs?" inquired Kezia, not a little puzzled by the novelty of the complaint.

"Pshaw! she means varicose veins," said Mr. Postle.

"Yes, so I suppose," said Kezia. "It's very kind of her, I'm sure, to come to us instead of Doctor Shackle, after all the falsities that has been spread about us, and has gone thro' the parish like an infection of a malignant nature——"

She was interrupted by the entrance of Uncle Rumbold, who swept through the surgery like a bearded meteor, with the parish constable in his vortex, in which, by an imperative beckon, he involved the maid-of-all-work, who was hurried along with them into the parlour.

"Dear me!" exclaimed my mother, "what is all this, brother? Who is that strange gentleman with the paper?"

"I am the Constable, ma'am, at your service," said the stranger, referring to the document in his hand; "and this here is a sarch warrant, for sarching the box or boxes of one Kezia Jenks."

"Mine!" faltered Kezia,—who, like many very innocent persons, had nevertheless a most intense dread and awe of the law, and all that belonged to it. "Mine!"

"I do wish, brother-in-law," said my father, in a tone of the deepest vexation, "I do wish you had been less precipitate! What has this faithful, devoted, hardworking, and affectionate creature done, that she should be affronted by suspicion, and have her character tarnished by such a proceeding? I would pledge my life for her honesty."

"I know you would!" replied Uncle Rumbold, "and therefore acted without consulting you, on my own judgment and responsibility. But I do nothing without grave deliberation; no man does, who wears this —" and he touched his beard. "Listen. In the dead of the night, with my own ears, I heard your paragon of fidelity open her chamber door, and proceed stealthily down stairs, where, by listening over the banisters, I heard her voice, which I can swear to, in conversation with some person or persons unknown. The words I could not distinguish.——Silence, woman, and let me proceed ——"

But Kezia was not to be silenced; but dropping on her knees, appealed to Heaven, and her master and mistress, to testify to her innocence.

"I was only sleep-walking,—which I have done afore, in this house, and other places besides,—being my misfortune, and such as will kill me, some day, off a parapet, or out of a window—as there is a judge in Heaven, it was only sleep-walking! And I waked up in the kitchen, by stumbling over the cold supper things, with my face on an am."

"A pretty story!" said Uncle Rumbold—echoed by his satellite, the constable.

"But a true one," said my father. "The poor girl is, to my knowledge, a somnambulist."

"A bamboozleist!" exclaimed Uncle Rumbold. "If you believe in such fables, brother-in-law, I do not—and never will. They're contrary to nature. And the spoons walked

off too in their sleep! Bah! Then you will not allow her box to be searched?"

"I will NOT," said my father.

"In that case," said Uncle Rumbold, "I shall remove my own person and property from the premises."

My mother looked horror-struck; yet not more so than her housemaid, as deeply interested in the hopes, for the dear twins, that hung on the smiles and frowns of Godfather Rumbold.

"O pray, pray," she sobbed, "don't quarrel and differ about me. I'm not worth it, whatever becomes of me. O Master—consider those dear precious innocent twins. Let my box be searched—I want to have it searched—it will do the things good to give them a fresh-airing!"

"You had better, George," whispered my mother with a twitch at my father's sleeve,—"There will be nothing found in it."

"Well—I wash my hands of it!" cried my father,—and the company in a body proceeded up-stairs to the attic landing, whither Kezia's box, that she kept in her bed-room, was lugged and ransacked. And never did searcher, legal or fiscal, expose such a heterogeneous medley of articles, of so little intrinsic value! A few clothes—scraps of ribbon, and fragments of patchwork—bits of dried orange and lemon-peel, various ha'penny ballads, and last dying speeches, with one solitary play-bill—a Moore's Almanack, and a Dream Book—keepsakes innumerable—locks of hair, of all colours, folded up in papers inscribed with female names, and one long silver tress labelled "My deer Muther's," with a date—a red-leather heart-pincushion—several double nuts—a reel-in-a-bottle—and a little bone needle-case, in the shape of a closed umbrella, with a paper tied to the handle, "*presented me by Mister Postle,*"—an old-fashioned wooden spice-box,

and last, not least, a yellow canvas sampler, with its worked alphabets and numerals, and Adam and Eve and the Apple Tree, and Kezia's own name, and the date at the bottom. On the whole, the impression produced by the exhibition was decidedly in favour of the honesty of the proprietor—that she was disinterested, and affectionate, somewhat superstitious, and had one more grain of romance than was suspected in her homely composition.

"Well, I've sarched many a sarvant's box in my time," said the constable, "and I never come across a more innocenter one than that!"

As the party returned down stairs, they were met at the door of the nursery by Mrs. Prideaux, who, dropping a very lady-like curtsey to Uncle Rumbold, tendered a bunch of keys on a steel ring. She was in that house, she said, a hired nurse, and so far in the capacity of a servant, and therefore begged to submit her boxes to inspection. But Uncle Rumbold as politely declined the offer: he had had quite enough of searching, and had become irksomely indebted in an apology to the maid-of-all-work; for he was a proud man in his way, and of all things that disagreed with his stomach, none was more indigestible than the proverbial pasty of Humility, humble pie.

CHAPTER XX.

OUR LUCK.

Our Uncle Rumbold, though fierce of aspect and manner, was not absolutely hard-hearted; and his pride relented considerably when he saw the maid-of-all-work come down stairs, with her eyes red and swollen with weeping. But his apologies were disclaimed. "It wasn't the searching her box," she said, "she didn't mind that, nor the being suspected, that made her cry, but the sight of her dear mother's hair, who died, poor soul! of a bilious calculation."

"Calculus," said my father, "calculus. But come, brother-in-law, let us inspect the premises, and have the constable's opinion of the burglary."

The trio accordingly repaired to the kitchen, where they minutely inspected the window and its fastenings, from which it appeared that a piece had been cut out of the shutter, so as to allow of the removal of the bolt, the sill was scratched and soiled with clay, and the ground, on the outside, bore in several places the imprint of a man's shoe or boot, thickly studded with hobnails. There was no doubt of the manner in which the entrance had been effected; and the parties having come to an unanimous conclusion on the subject, the constable was despatched to take the necessary steps for the discovery and apprehension of the offender or offenders. Uncle Rumbold undertook to order the printing and issue of the handbills, whilst my father, with a heavy heart, proceeded to his escritoire in the parlour, with a task before him which, to a man who disliked letter-writing in general, was a heavy infliction—seeing that he had to indite three several epistles, all on subjects of the most painful and

disagreeable nature, namely, to the Board, with his resignation of office; to Mr. Ruffy, communicating the fate of his presentation tankard; and to the curate, conveying the loss of the silver-gilt salts. It would have moved a heart of nether millstone to have seen how he spoiled pen after pen, and sheet after sheet of paper, vainly turning his eyes for inspiration from the mirror, with its bird and ball, to the ceiling or the floor, the wall or the window, the poplar-tree, and the blue sky. Oh, if my father ever envied a rich or great man, it was then, just then, for the sake of his private secretary!

To add to his distress, his usual resource in such emergencies was unavailable. In reply to his application for help, Mr. Postle had excused himself under the pretence of urgent business in the surgery; but, in reality, the assistant was indisposed with a fit of spleen. He had heard of the affair of the search-warrant; and after indignantly asking of the jar of conserve of roses why Mrs. Prideaux had not been suspected instead of Kezia, had solemnly promised the pestle and mortar to pluck old Rumbold, at the very first opportunity, by the beard—a threat he would probably have put in execution but for a positive injunction from the injured maid, who overheard him pledging himself to the same effect to the bottle of leeches.

"No, Mr. Postle," she said, "you will do no such thing. It's a heathen fashion, to be sure, and makes him look more like a satire of the woods than a Christian: but when you consider what hangs on it, namely, the future prospects in life of our poor helpless innocent twins, you'll respect his beard as if it belonged to Moses or Aaron. As for my being suspected, it comes natural to a servant, and like a part of her work, to clear up her character sometimes as well as her kitchen: and as regards the searching of my box, it's no-

thing to the rummaging of one's thoughts and feelings which I have had to undergo in other places. But so long as master and missis, and you don't suspect me, I can bear it from any one else. So, for the sake of the dear twins, you must let the matter drop, and not offend Mr. Rumbold by look, or word, or deed, and especially by touching his beard, which would be cutting off young heirs with a shilling."

Having extorted a promise to this pacific effect, Kezia repaired to the nursery, where she relieved her full heart and excited feelings by a good cry and a hearty fondling of the precious babes. But beyond this solace, she had a secret project of her own, in accordance with which she addressed herself to the genteel nurse.

"Oh, Mrs. Prideaux, isn't it a shocking thing to see a family like ours, for no fault of their own, coming step by step, deeper and deeper, into misfortune and misery! First, that dreadful supper, and then the robbery, and then the loss of the parish—it reminds me of one of my own runs of bad luck, when first I was knocked down by a runaway horse, and then picked up by a pickpocket, and then sent home in a hackney-coach that had just carried a patient to the hospital with a putrid fever."

"The planets," said the nurse, "are decidedly sinister."

"Then you think," said Kezia, delighted with the astrological turn of the conversation, "that it is our ill stars are in fault?"

"Of course," said the nurse. "The aspects of the planets, at this juncture, and as affects this house, are particularly malignant."

"They must be, indeed!" said Kezia, with a melancholy shake of her head. "According to the Almanac, their bad influences affect sometimes one part and sometimes

another, and at different times; but here they are, as I may say, smiting us back and belly, hip and thigh, all at once!"

"The natural effect," said the nurse, "of the planetary configurations, and especially of the position of Saturn."

"Ah! with his ring!" exclaimed Kezia. "Mr. Postle once showed him to me through his refractory telescope."

"A refracting one, I presume," said the nurse.

"I believe it was," said Kezia, "and it brought down the moon till it looked as big as a silver waiter. Talking of which reminds me of the stolen plate; and which it is my private notion that you know as much or more about than any one else."

"That *I* do!" exclaimed the nurse, with a slight start, and fixing her keen eyes on the face of the maid-of-all-work as if she would read her very soul. "That I know who stole the plate!"

"Yes," said Kezia, "by means of the heavenly bodies. I have heard of many persons recovering their lost things through star-gazers and fortune-tellers; and of course as you can cast nativities, *you can do the other.*"

This was the very point at which she had been aiming; but the answer of the nurse put an extinguisher on her hopes.

"Between ourselves," she said, "I have cast some figures on purpose; but there is a mystery in the matter that defies my art."

"The more's the pity," said Kezia; "for I made sure that you could discover the thief. And then that lost sheet, as was found in the churchyard—how it was abstracted from a press to which nobody but ourselves had access: I own to thoughts, and suspicions, and misgivings about it, that make me shudder!"

"Then do you really suppose," asked the nurse, "that your master was guilty of stealing tha dead child?"

"The Lord forbid!" exclaimed Kezia. "I would as soon suspect him of kidnapping live ones for the Plantations! No, I was not thinking of him, but of a treacherous, deceitful being, whom to think of under the same roof, and in the same room with one, makes my very blood in a curdle."

The nurse again fixed one of her scrutinising looks on Kezia; but the latter was thinking of quite another personage, as implied by her next question.

"What is your real opinion, Mrs. Prideaux, of supernatural agency?"

"The same as your own," was the prompt answer of the nurse.

"In that case," said Kezia, "I don't mind saying it's my belief that our sheet was purloined away by Satan himself, whose delight is in casting down the good and the godly, and for the express purpose of ruining my poor master."

"It is quite possible," said the nurse, who seemed to take delight in pampering the credulity of her simple-minded and single-hearted companion. "Such an act would be perfectly in unison with the diabolical character. My belief coincides with your own. But remember, Kezia, the age is a sceptical age, and its infidels especially repudiate astrology and demonology; so that the less we say of our own convictions the better. Indeed, it would cost me my bread were it known that I had cast the nativity of those dear twins."

"But it never shall be," cried Kezia—"never! Do you think I would break the solemn oath you made me take on the Testament?"

"No—I know that you would not," said the nurse, in her sweetest tone; "for if you did, there are lightnings to burr

your body, and other fires to scorch your soul for the perjury." And so the conference ended.

My father, meanwhile, had toiled on at his irksome task in the parlour—blotting, blundering, erasing, correcting, tearing up, and beginning *de novo*, in a way that a corresponding clerk would have gone crazy to witness; for if my parent's sustenance had depended on the exercise of his pen, he must have died of starvation. At last, after infinite trouble, he had completed the whole of the missives, and was just in the act of drawing that long sigh of satisfaction with which a weary man is apt to hail the accomplishment of his labour, when my mother entered the room, drew a chair beside him, seated herself, and laid her hand on his arm. There was nothing in her face to indicate any interruption of the mental repose and relief which my father had promised himself; her looks were as cheerful as the tone with which she uttered her preluding monosyllable—

"George!"

"My dear!"

"Can you forgive me for keeping from you a little secret?"

"Of course I can," replied my father, with his old smile. "But will your own sex—for being so unwomanly?"

"No matter for them," said my mother. "I meant to have hoarded it up for an agreeable surprise; but with such troubles as have come upon us, it seems only fair that you should share in any comfort which I am enjoying myself. You remember the 20*l.* note that you gave me last week?"

"Yes—for Mr. Lobb."

"Ah, Mr. Lobb must wait a bit," said my mother. "That note went quite a different way, and for another purpose. Up to London, George, and for a purchase. Can you guess?"

"For winter clothing, perhaps," said my father, "or a fresh stock of household linen."

"For winter wealth, George," said my mother, "and a stock of good luck. What do you think of a lottery ticket?"

My father made no reply—he was confounded by this new blow.

"Do you hear, George," cried my mother—"a lottery ticket!"

"Yes, twenty pounds gone," murmured my father.

"But they are not gone!" said my mother.

"As completely," said my father, "as if the note had lighted a candle. The last money in the house, too, and which ought to have paid the butcher. That accounts, then, for Lobb's insolence about the tainted mutton."

"Well, well," said my mother, "we shall soon get rid of Lobb after the drawing. The ticket is sure to come up a prize."

"I wish it may!" said my father.

"It is sure to come up a prize," repeated my mother, "for I dreamt three times running of the number."

My father jumped up from his seat, and after pacing a few turns up and down the room, suddenly stopped short and addressed himself to himself in the mirror.

"If ever there was a Minister deserved impeachment—if ever a Chancellor of the Exchequer who ought to have lost his head on the block—it was the man who first invented a mode of raising money by the encouragement of public gambling?" He then turned abruptly to my mother, and inquired whether the ticket was registered.

"Yes, and the lottery was to be drawn on the 16th."

"And this is the 18th," said my father.

My mother instantly started up from her seat, and rang

the bell, to know if the post had come in, and whether there were any letters.

"Yes, one," which Kezia had laid on the kitchen shelf, where, in the unusual bustle of the morning, it had been forgotten. It was addressed to my mother, who seized the letter, broke the seal, glanced over the contents, and dropping the paper from her hand, sank, gasping, on the sofa—the blankness of her face sufficiently indicating the nature of the intelligence.

"Then the money is gone!" exclaimed my father.

My mother sobbed, and covered her face with her hands; Kezia wrung hers in mute despair. Our evil stars were verily shooting ones, and were practising on our devoted family as at a target!

"Well, what is this new disaster?" inquired the voice of Uncle Rumbold, who had just entered the parlour, but stopped short at two paces from the door, clutching his beard in his right hand.

"Nothing, nothing," replied my father, forgetting his own vexation in the affliction of my mother—"only a lost bank-note."

"What, another robbery?"

"No," replied my father, "thrown into the fire—blown out of window—washed down the sink—a mere trifle."

"A trifle!" exclaimed my mother, unwilling to forego any benefit to be derived from her brother's sympathy—"our last twenty pounds in the world—intended to pay the butcher."

But her indirect appeal had no effect. Liberal of advice and personal exertion, Uncle Rumbold, from habit and inclination, was slow in drawing his purse-strings. The amount, he admitted, was no trifle; but sometimes a loss became a gain in the end, by teaching those who had

neglected their twenties to take care of their fifties. This new misfortune, however, seemed gradually to touch him, for shortly afterwards, having deliberately seated himself, he addressed his unlucky relatives as follows :—"Sister, I have been thinking over your various troubles, and have come to the conclusion, brother-in-law, that, what with your loss of the parish appointment and other drawbacks, your affairs are, or soon will be, in anything but a prosperous condition. Such being the case, I feel called upon, as a near relative, to step a little beyond my original intentions for the family benefit, and especially as regards my twin nephews, though I trust I have sufficiently testified my regard for them already by that invaluable present, the Light of Nature. However, as I said before, I have determined to stretch a point, but on the condition that what I do shall be done in my own way."

"I am sure," said my mother, "we shall be truly grateful for your kindness in any way."

"I am not so certain of that," replied Uncle Rumbold: "however, what I propose is this,—to relieve you altogether of the care and maintenance of one of those two boys. As soon, therefore, as my godson can run alone, I am ready to adopt him; to board, lodge, and educate—in short, to provide for him through life at my own cost and charge, and of course according to my own system and views."

Here he paused, expecting an answer, whereas his proposition was met by a dead silence. My father, taken by surprise, was at a loss what to say, and my mother looked absolutely aghast. She had not forgotten certain features of the system alluded to, and in her mind's eye saw her poor offspring, now climbing a tree for his food, at the risk of his neck, and now thrown doglike into a river, to sink or swim as might happen—in short, undergoing all the hard

discipline associated with a young Indian savage, or child of nature.

"Humph! I see how it is," said Uncle Rumbold; "but I do not press an immediate answer. Perhaps you will make up your minds before my departure. I have ordered a chaise at five o'clock, which will carry me to Wisbeach, where I shall meet the coach;—no words: my arrangements once made are never altered, and, let me add, my offers once refused are never repeated."

So saying, he rose and walked off to make his preparations for his departure; whilst my mother took the opportunity of expressing her sentiments to her helpmate on the godfatherly offer.

"No, I never will consent to it," she said—"never, never! To have a child of mine climbing trees, and swimming ponds, and sleeping in the open air, like a gipsy, or Peter the Wild Boy! And taught bird's nesting, and tomahawking, and all sorts of savage tricks, instead of the accomplishments of a young gentleman—and, at any rate, dressed up more like a Guy Fawkes than a Christian—and with a beard, when he's old enough, like a Jewish rabbi,—Oh! it would break my heart, it would indeed, George! to have a boy of mine begin the world with such a prospect before him!"

"Well, well," said my father, "so be it. I am as loth as you are to have a son of mine bred up into a bearded oddity, like his uncle, or old Martin Van Butchell. So go and see to the dinner, and in the interim I will invent the best excuse I can to offer to my redoubtable kinsman."

Thus comforted, my mother applied herself to the arrangement of the dinner, which, thanks to what Kezia called the "supperfluities" of the night before, presented an unusual variety and profusion of the delicacies of the season. The meal, nevertheless, passed off very drearily. The spirits of

the presiding pair were weighed down by the communication they had to make, and the certain resentment that awaited their decision; whilst the temper of Uncle Rumbold himself was still ruffled by a short but sharp argument on somnambulism with Mr. Postle in the surgery. The conversation, such as it was, had flagged into silence, when the post-chaise drew up at the door.

"Now then, sister," cried Uncle Rumbold, rising from his seat, "now then, brother-in-law, for your ultimatum. Am I to have the boy or not?"

"Why then, brother," began my mother, but her voice failed and died away in an inarticulate croak.

"The truth is," said my father, "we are deeply sensible of your kindness, and sorry to decline it. If the children had not been twins, we might have felt and decided otherwise; but we really cannot find in our hearts to separate, so early in life, a pair of brothers, that nature herself has so closely united."

"That's enough," said Uncle Rumbold. "A plain offer has met a plain refusal—no offence on either side; but, by my beard, if ever I offer to adopt a child again—" What followed was inaudible or suppressed: he hastily shook hands with his relatives, and hurried into the gaping vehicle, wherein he threw himself back, as if determined on sulks and silence. In another moment, however, his face and beard appeared at the open window.

"God bless you, sister," he said; "brother-in-law, God bless you,—though how you are to be blessed, is more than I know, for you will never be guided by the light of nature!"

Every word of this leave-taking was overheard by Kezia, who with outstretched neck and straining ears listened eagerly for his least syllable. But those words were his

last,—not a breath about the dear twins, his own nephews. The whip cracked, the horse-shoes clattered, the wheels rattled; and the few boys who had assembled set up a cheer for the Grand Mogul. The last chance was gone. In another minute, the black and yellow body, which contained Uncle Rumbold, was out of sight; and with it vanished, alas! all the hopes that he had engendered!

CHAPTER XXI.

A DEMONSTRATION.

"So much for relatives!" said my mother, as she poured out the tea, and handed a cup of the beverage to my father. "My precious brother, who would not shave off a hair of his beard for love or money, will now cut off his own nephews without a scruple!"

"Nothing more likely," said my father.

"Do you really think, then," inquired my mother, "that he will leave them quite out of his will?"

She waited in vain for an answer; and at last obtained, in lieu of it, another query, far wide of her mark. Throughout his troubles and vexations, my father's mind had been haunted by a vague sense of a something amiss; but his thoughts had always been diverted elsewhere before his fears could assume a definite shape; now, however, his misgivings, after many gleamings and vanishings, suddenly recurred to him, and taking a distinct character prompted the abrupt question—"Where is Catechism Jack?"

Nobody knew. In the crowding events of the day he had not been missed; there had been no medicine to deliver, so that his services were not in requisition, and even Mr. Postle

could not tell what had become of him. On comparing notes, he had not been seen by any one since an early hour in the morning, when he had slipped out at the surgery door.

Here was a new cause of anxiety for my father; if any mischance happened to the idiot, the blame in the present temper of the parish was certain to be visited on the master, who had taken the half-witted boy from the care of the old dame, and become responsible for his safety and welfare. Many were the conjectures that were hazarded on the cause of his absence. In my father's opinion, Jack had gone on a visit to his former guardian, and was spending the day with her: my mother, prone to dream of disasters, at once pronounced him drowned in the river; Kezia's fancy sent him tramping after a recruiting party which had passed through the village; and the assistant supposed that he was playing truant and chuck-farthing with other young dogs as idle as himself. The last guess was most probably the true one; however, in the midst of their speculations, his voice was clearly recognised, and in another moment Jack, in an unusual state of excitement, burst into the parlour, round which he pranced with a sort of chimney-sweep's caper, exclaiming with ecstasy, "The tongs and bones! The tongs and bones!"

"Why, Jack," asked my father, "what is the matter with you?"

"The tongs and bones," said Jack, standing still for a moment, and then resuming his dance and his song.

"Speak, idiot!" cried Mr. Postle, seizing the boy by the shoulder and shaking him. "What is the meaning of this mummery?"

"O don't, pray don't beat me," whined Jack. "I will say my catechism."

"Poor fellow!" said my father. "Be gentle with him."

"Huzza! The tongs and bones!" shouted Jack, extricating himself by a sudden twist from the grasp of the assistant; and darting through the parlour door, and across the hall, into the kitchen, to the infinite horror of Kezia, who really believed, as she declared afterwards, that the boy had been bitten by "a rapid dog." Here he continued his capering and his cry; till observing the table with food on it, by one of those abrupt transitions common to weak intellects, his thoughts fastened on a new object; and at once subsiding into his usual demeanour, and seating himself at the board, he asked Kezia to give him his supper. The maid-of-all-work immediately complied; and as after some minutes he continued to eat and drink very quietly, Mr. Postle returned to the surgery, and my parents to the parlour.

"The tongs and bones," muttered my mother as she resumed her seat at the tea-table, "what on earth can it mean?"

"Why, I suspect it means," said my father, "that the tag-rag and bobtail of the village have been treating some quarrelsome couple with what is called rough music; and Jack has been present and perhaps performing at the concert."

This explanation was so satisfactory to both parties, that Jack and his chorus were speedily forgotten; and the pair had resumed their quiet confidential intercourse, when Mr. Postle entered, with an ominous face, and placed in my father's hands something which he said he had just found upon the counter. It was a scrap of dirty coarse paper, folded note-fashion, and containing only the following words: "Let the Dockter and Family keep in Dores to nite And look to yure Fastnings. A Frend."

"Well, and what do you make of this document?" asked my father.

"That it is what it professes to be," answered the assistant, looking uneasily at my mother, as if embarrassed by her presence.—"I will put the thing technically. There is, you know, sir, a certain local epidemic in the parish, of a very malignant type, and attended with very extensive irritation. Now this party intends to say that probably there will be an eruption."

"I understand," said my father, with a nod of intelligence —"but doubt very much if the disease will take that active turn."

"There is no doubt at all," said Mr. Postle. "I know a party who has been round amongst the infected, on purpose to feel their pulse; and the symptoms are of a most unfavourable character. For instance, tongue hot—breath acrimonious and offensive—voice loud and harsh—with the use of expressions bordering on furious mania."

"A mere temporary fever," said my father, "that will pass off without any dangerous paroxysm."

"I wish it may," said Mr. Postle, "and without a nocturnal crisis."

My mother's head during this mysterious discussion had turned mechanically from speaker to speaker, as if moved by internal clockwork; but she could gather no more information from their faces than from their words; and as the consultation might be a long one, and she hated medical matters, she briefly intimated to my father that she should go up-stairs to the children, and left the room.

"And do you really suppose," asked my father, "that there is going to be any disturbance or outrage? Pooh, pooh—I can't and won't believe it."

"So you said of the hostility of the parish Board," retorted the assistant.

"Well, well, do as you please," said my father. "I leave the matter entirely in your own hands."

"In that case," said Mr. Postle, "I shall at once lock all the doors, and secure the lower windows, and this one to begin with;" and accordingly he pulled up the sliding parlour-shutter, and inserted the screws. "Now then for the others"

"Very good," said my father, "and then come to supper with us in the parlour. Poor Postle," he continued, as the assistant departed to look to the household defences, "he was always an alarmist, and I'll be bound expects the premises to be stormed and sacked, on the strength of an anonymous letter, intended, most probably, to play upon his fears."

True to his plan, the alarmist, meanwhile, proceeded from window to window, and from door to door, locking, bolting, barring, screwing; the surgery door alone, for convenience, being left but partially fastened by a single latch, which, however, could only be raised on the inside. The fanlight above he barricaded with a stout board; and ascertained, shutter by shutter, that the defences of the window were all sound and secure. He then took a final peep at Jack, who was still quietly making an interminable meal in the kitchen; and finding all safe, repaired to the parlour, and took his usual place at the supper-table; not without some bantering from my father as to the preparations in a certain fortress for a state of siege, and the strength of its garrison. But the joke was mistimed.

The meal was about half finished, when attracted by the attitude of my mother, whose sense of hearing was remarkably acute, my father laid down his knife and fork, and

began listening; in which he was soon imitated by Mr. Postle; and for awhile the three, silent and motionless, seemed stiffened into as many statues. There was certainly some unusual humming in the air.

"It sounds," said my father, "like the distant murmur of the sea."

"More like the getting up of a gale," said Mr. Postle.

"It's the noise of a mob!" exclaimed my mother; "I hear voices and the tramping of feet!"

"Say I told you so!" cried Mr. Postle, jumping up from his chair, and resuming the knife with which he had been cutting his cold meat.

"And if it be a mob," said my father, "it may not be coming to us."

"Hark! it comes nearer and nearer," said my mother, turning pale. "In the name of wonder, George——" she stopped, startled by a loud noise and a sudden outcry close at hand.

The distant sounds, which excited so intense an interest in the parlour, had reached the kitchen; where they no sooner struck on the tympanum of Jack, than, like a young savage who recognises the warwhoop of his tribe, he started up, overturning his heavy wooden chair, and shouting his old cry, the "Tongs and bones—the tongs and bones!" rushed through the hall, and the surgery, and out of the door, which he left wide open. Kezia, in hot pursuit, with my father and Mr. Postle, were soon on the spot; but only just in time to distinguish the flying figure of the idiot, before he disappeared in the gloom of the lane; his cry being still audible, but getting fainter and fainter till it was lost in the general murmur of the mob.

"They are coming up the lane—there is no time to be lost," said Mr. Postle, pushing Kezia, and then drawing my

father by the arm into the surgery; the door of which he bolted and locked. They then hurried to the parlour; but my mother, with hen-like instinct, had flown up to her young ones, and was sitting in the nursery to meet whatever might happen, with her twin babes at her bosom. Kezia, by a kindred impulse, was soon in the same chamber; while my father and his assistant posted themselves at a staircase window which overlooked the lane. It was quite dusk; but at the turn of the road the crowd was just visible, a darker mass amid the gloom, and a moving one, which, as it approached, occasionally threw out a detached figure or two in front, barely distinguishable as of human shape. Now and then there was a shout; and more rarely a peal of hoarse laughter. As the mob neared the house, its pace quickened.

"There's Jack!" exclaimed Mr. Postle, whose eyesight was much keener than my father's; "he's winding in and out among them like an eel!"

"And if I mistake not," said my father, "they have something like a black flag."

"Yes—borne by a tall big fellow," answered the assistant. "As I live, it's John Hobbes!"

"Poor man," sighed my father.

"As yet I can make out no fire-arms," said Mr. Postle; "but they have pitchforks and sticks. And yonder's a stuffed figure like a Guy—they are going to burn us in effigy. Yes, they've got faggots and a truss of straw. Here they come at a run! But ah, ah! my fine fellows, you are too late. Look!—they are trying the surgery door!"

The foremost of the mob, in fact, were endeavouring to effect an entrance as described; but, being foiled, commenced a smart rattling with their sticks on the doors and

shutters, accompanied by frequent and urgent invitations to the doctor and his assistant to come out and receive their fees. Tired at last of this pastime, they set up a cry "to the front!—to the front!"

Anticipating this movement, my father and his companion hurried into the nursery, the abode of Terror and Despair. My mother, with an infant on each arm, was seated in the easy chair, her eyes closed, and her face of a ghastly white; so that she might have been taken for dead, or in a fit, but for occasional ejaculations. Kezia, with her apron thrown over her head, knelt beside her mistress; whilst the nurse, with folded arms, leaned her back against the wall between the windows—a position secure from any missile from without. The two babes alone were unconscious of danger—the one smiling and crowing; the other fast asleep.

Taking the hint from Mrs. Prideaux, my father removed his partner and her progeny into a safe nook beyond the angle of projectiles; and only in good time; for the arrangement was hardly completed when a large stone came crashing through the window and rebounded on the floor.

"Put out the lights!" cried Mr. Postle; "they only serve for marks to aim at,"—and in spite of the remonstrances of the females the candles were extinguished.

The whole mob by this time had weathered the corner of the house; and having vainly tried the front door, and thoroughly battered it, as well as the parlour-shutter with their bludgeons, proceeded to organize that concert of rough music with which the lower orders in the provinces were accustomed to serenade an obnoxious character—a hideous medley of noises extracted from cow-horns, catcalls, whistles, old kettles, metal pans, rattles, and other discordant instruments, described by Jack as the tongs and bones. The din was dreadful; and yet far less so than the profane impre-

cations and savage threats that were shouted out at every pause of the wild band. There were women too in the crowd; and the cry of "Where's Sukey Hobbes?—Come out, you body-snatcher!" were frequently repeated by voices much shriller than the rest.

"I must—I will speak to them," said my father; and before Mr. Postle could remonstrate or interpose, he had thrown up the sash, and uttered the first three words of his address. But he was heard no further. His appearance was the signal for one of those yells of execration so awful to hear from a multitude of human throats: a ferocious howl fit only to salute an incarnate fiend, and from which my father recoiled in soul, more than he shrank in body from the ensuing volley of stones. His place, however, was immediately occupied by another orator, in the person of Kezia, who, regardless of the pelting, presented herself to the assembly, screaming at the highest pitch of her voice:—

"You sanguine monsters! do you want to kill us with fright, and our poor innocent babies!"

"Yes—and to make skeletons of you," replied a hoarse voice from the crowd; a retort applauded by so vociferous a cheer, and such atrocious expressions, that Kezia, with an exclamation of horror, precipitately withdrew to her old position.

Her retreat was hailed with a loud huzza, mingled with derisive laughter, and as it ceased ringing the dark room was suddenly illuminated by a red glare that projected the shadow of the window-frames, inwards, upon the ceiling. The mob had ignited a quantity of straw and wood, forming an enormous bonfire, by the light of which the persons and features of the ringleaders were easily recognised.

"There is Jack again!" said Mr. Postle, "flitting amidst the smoke like an imp of mischief. And John Hobbes is

waving his black flag about like a madman—and yonder is Roger Heap, with a child's bonnet on a pitchfork!"

"And there am I, burning by proxy," said my father, pointing to the dark stuffed figure that was dangling from a triangle of poles in the midst of the blaze. "I shall soon be done to a cinder, and then the cooks will disperse."

"I wish they may," said Mr. Postle, "but the faces they turn up to us are desperately fierce and vicious, as well as their words. I hardly think that their excitement will be satisfied without an attack on the premises, and perhaps taking a few ounces of blood. But what is the matter now?"

As he spoke there was an uncertain stir and movement among the crowd, with a confused outcry, amidst which the words "justice" and "constables" were prominently audible. But it was a false alarm: his worship and his myrmidons either did not or would not know of the tumult, and were snugly and safely housed at home, or in their usual haunts. The report, however, served the same purpose that their presence would have done; for after some hesitation and wavering of the mass to and fro, Roger Heap thrusting his pitchfork into the burning effigy, ran with it up the river bank, and pitched the half-consumed figure, still blazing, into the stream. The mob then dispersed in different directions, the last of them being Catechism Jack, who, after tossing about the glowing sparkling embers, squib-fashion, for a minute or two, ran after the main body.

The smouldering figure meanwhile slowly floated along on the surface of the sluggish river, silently watched by my father and his assistant; till after a few turns and windings, it vanished like the last twinkle of a burnt paper, in the black, blank, distance.

"So ends the auto-da-fé," exclaimed Mr. Postle. "Now, then, for candles to inspect and repair our damage."

It was less than might have been expected. Thanks to the precaution of extinguishing the lights, the majority of the stones had missed the windows: only a few panes were broken; and the holes were soon stopped with paper and rags.

"Are the wretches all gone, George?" asked my mother before she ventured to unclose her eyes.

"All," answered my father—"man, woman, and boy!"

Thus reassured, my mother, with many broken phrases of thanksgiving, came out of her corner, and willingly resigned the dear twins to Kezia, who covered them with her kisses. The nurse also quitted her position, and in her usual calm sweet voice suggested that her mistress, after her fright and exhaustion, would be the better for some restorative; to which the assistant added that nobody, the infants excepted, would be the worse for some sort of stimulant.

Accordingly the brandy, the kettle, the sugar, tumblers, and spoons, were fetched from below; and cheered by a cordial mixture, the nerves of the company, manly and womanly, soon recovered their tone, and enabled the parties to discuss the circumstances of the recent riot. It was generally agreed that, for that night at least, there would be no further disturbance; they, nevertheless, continued to sit up, keeping a vigilant watch, back and front, till two hours having elapsed without any fresh alarm, they retired to their respective chambers.

"And how is all this dreadful work to end, George?" inquired my mother, as soon as she found herself, with her husband, in their bedroom.

"Heaven knows! replied my father. "Only one thing is certain—that the practice must be given up, and we must quit the neighbourhood."

"What, sell the business!" exclaimed my mother.

"Yes, if anybody will buy it," said my father. "He must be a liberal man, indeed, who, after this night's demonstration, will bid me anything for the good-will."

"Why then we are ruined!" cried my mother.

"Or something very like it," responded my father—as indeed appeared but too probable when my unlucky parents came to talk over their future prospects; the only comfort before them being that very forlorn hope held out by the old proverb—when things are at the worst they will mend.

CHAPTER XXII.

AN INVALID.

THE moment my father opened his eyes in the morning, they rested on the shattered window panes, with their holes patched with paper or stuffed with rags, the transparent and the opaque, as they admitted or excluded the early sunshine, forming strong diversities of light and shadow. Still, the events of the overnight seemed so dream-like, that he mechanically stepped out of bed, and went to look abroad for confirmation. And, alas! there it was, in the road; that great dark mark, indicating the site of the opprobrious bon fire—a round black spot, a blot, as it were, on the parish. The leaves on one side of the poplar tree were visibly scorched; and he could even trace where Roger Heap had run up the bank to heave the burning effigy in the river. On these tokens he looked, however, with more pain than resentment. Accustomed, as a medical man, to witness the infirmities, frailties, frenzies, and morbid irritability of human nature, he made large allowance for its violence and

its weakness; and felt little more anger at the outrage of the mob, than if he had been struck by a crazy patient, or abused by a delirious one.

My mother, on the contrary, was no sooner awake to the dilapidations in the casement, with all their suggestions of glaziers, and new panes, and putty, than she burst out into the most bitter reproaches on the whole parish; and especially the authorities, who ought to have preserved the peace, from the justice down to the beadle. They were a set, she said, of helpless, cowardly sots, and deserved to be locked in their own cage and set in their own stocks for neglecting their duties.

"Well, well," said my father, "thank Heaven, we are all safe and unhurt; for nobody has even received a scratch; which, considering such missiles as those"—and he pointed to a large stone on the floor—"must be regarded as providential."

"It's that," replied my mother, "that makes me so mad! One had better be murdered at once, than subjected to such dreadful alarms, and scared out of one's senses;" and again she launched out in vituperation of the village wretches. The truth is, there is nothing that people resent more strongly, or forgive less easily, than a thorough frightening; the absence of personal injury serving to aggravate the offence. Thus my mother, finding herself safe and sound, as well as all who belonged to her, begrudged, miserlike, the needless expenditure of terror on so little real damage; just as a certain traveller reproached the highwayman, who pleaded in extenuation of having shot at him, that there was no bullet in the pistol. "So much the worse," exclaimed the indignant old gentleman, "so much the worse, you villain; for then you frightened me for nothing!"

My mother's denunciations, however, did not confine

themselves to the inhabitants of the neighbourhood; but gradually took a wider range; and finally involved so large a portion of mankind in general, as to compel my father to remind her, that, with such sentiments, one ought to renounce society, and retire into solitude.

"And why shouldn't we renounce society?" cried my mother. "Didn't society renounce us on the night of the christening? For my part, I could begin to-morrow—and go into a desert!"

"No doubt of it," replied my father, very gravely. "The only difficulty is to dwell there. It may do very well for a lone man or woman, disgusted with society, to become a recluse, and live in a cave, a cell, or a grotto; but I fear it would be extremely inconvenient, if not impracticable, for married people, with a young family, to turn hermits."

"No matter," said my mother. "I know what I mean. I hate the world, and wish I could fly from it."

"Pooh, pooh," said my father.

"And what am I to do then," whined my mother, "if I am not to complain!"

"Why, come here," said my father, "and look at the flight of the miller's pigeons, how pretty, and playful, and harmless, they look, after the burning flakes that were fluttering in the air last night."

My mother immediately slid out of bed, and slipped on her dressing-gown, but instead of looking at the miller's pigeons, went off to her own dovecote, the nursery, to assure herself of the welfare of her twin-babes. They were fast asleep; and their calm, chubby innocent faces soon put to flight whatever remained of her misanthropy. An effect they had previously produced on Kezia, who, like her mistress, had walked up in such a virulent humour against the whole county, that, as she declared, "provided the

family had an ark, she shouldn't care if all Lincolnshire was under water."

My father meanwhile dressed himself with professional celerity, and went down to the surgery; which he no sooner entered, than to his astonishment he found himself in utter darkness. The shutters had not been taken down; and the fanlight over the door was still blocked up by its temporary barricade. It was the first time that the assistant had failed to begin business at the usual hour, and my father hastened into the kitchen, and anxiously inquired if anything was the matter with Mr. Postle.

"I am afraid there is, sir," said Kezia, "for I overheard him very restless in the night. He got up several times, and walked about his room, a-talking to himself. Afterwards, towards morning, he was quiet: so thinking he was asleep, instead of calling him, I thought best to let him indulge a little."

"Quite right, Kizzy," replied my father. "The poor fellow's zeal and excitement last night have been too much for him."

"I believe they have, indeed," said Kezia, with great animation; "for to be sure Mr. Postle takes as much excitement and interest in us as if he had been born and bred in the family; and its good or bad luck comes home to him like a blood relation."

"Yes," said my father, "and more than to some blood relations with long beards:" an allusion that Kezia understood and intensely relished, "But I must go and open shop," and, rejecting the housemaid's assistance, he took down the surgery shutters, and locking the outer door, repaired to the breakfast parlour, where he found my mother and two unopened letters awaiting his presence. The first, from the curate, was kind and considerate. He

did not deny some temporary vexation at the loss of the plate, as the gift of his late congregation: but fortunately their regard and good will were not removable with the salt-cellars; the intrinsic value of which was so immaterial to him, that he begged my father would think no more of the matter. The lawyer's letter from Mr. Ruffey was more rigid: clients, he said, were not so grateful a class in general, as to make presentation tankards to attorneys of common occurrence. He did therefore set a very high value on the testimonial to his professional zeal and ability, independent of its worth as solid silver. The exact value he could not state: but it was considerable. To bring home such a robbery to the perpetrators was a duty to society. He relied accordingly that for the public interest my father would leave no stone unturned, and spare no expense, to trace the stolen property, and thereby bring the offender or offenders to justice. In this hope he would say nothing about compensation, or an equivalent—at least for the present.

"Humph!" said my father, "the lawyer, at any rate, must be indemnified."

"And here," said my mother, holding out a three-cornered epistle, "is the answer to a note which I wrote to Mrs. Trent." My father took the billet and read as follows:—

"MADAM,

"In answer to your distressing communication, what can I say, or, indeed, what can be said, where necessity extorts submission? My plate is gone—and by this time melted down—and consequently irretrievable.

"My poor silver souvenirs! Every spoon represented a young lady! I have others left; but those were my favourites. All massy and solid, and stamped with the Gold-

smith's mark, and each recalling some interesting young female, now a highly polished and well-educated woman. One of the spoons, with a ducal crest, was left me by a charming, accomplished creature, just finished, and now moving in the first circles of rank and fashion. Another, with a plain cipher, belonged to the present Lady Mawbey, and retained the marks of her little aristocratic teeth. To a preceptress, such memorials of the juvenile objects of her affectionate solicitude have a preciousness beyond Potosi and Peru. Of course, as regards mere metallic value, they may be replaced by an equal number of spoons, of equal weight, or coalesced into a silver teapot; but, alas! all the endearing associations are obliterated for ever!

"I am, Madam,

"Your very obedient humble servant,

"AMELIA TRENCH."

"She must have a silver teapot!" exclaimed my father. "Though where it is to come from, in the present state of our finances, is beyond my guess. And, talking of teapots, Postle is poorly this morning, my dear, and must have his breakfast in bed—Kezia will take it up to him." Had my father looked at the maid-of-all-work as he spoke, he would have perceived a sign of prudency that would have greatly diverted him, for both her cheeks seemed flushed with a claret-mark; but his attention was attracted towards his own meal, and the blush evaporated without a comment. Kezia quietly placed a great cup of tea and a small plate of toast on her waiter, and proceeded up stairs to introduce his breakfast, with all proper discretion, into the bedchamber of Mr. Postle.

"Well, I must and will say," cried my mother, "we are a persecuted family. Our misfortunes never come singly—

they never rain but they pour. After all our other troubles, here is Mr. Postle taken ill—breeding an infectious fever perhaps—and with those dear children in the house—I declare I shall go distracted!"

"Make yourself easy," replied my father, "Postle is only a little out of sorts, and rest and quiet will soon set him to rights. And in the mean time the burden of his illness will fall chiefly on myself; for I shall not only have to make up the prescriptions, but as that Catechism Jack has absconded, I must carry out my own physic."

"I wish it may be so," said my mother, shaking her head. "But I am far from satisfied in my mind. Mr. Postle is a very feverish subject, and when he shakes hands with one his palm is always burning hot. If he breaks out with anything catching, I shall go wild!"

"At any rate, ma'am," said Kezia, who had returned in time to hear the latter part of the discussion, "fever or no fever, we'll use all the preventives. The dear infants shall have camphor bags directly; and Mr. Postle's landing shall be well fumigated with hot vinegar, and we'll burn bastilles all over the house."

"Pastils," said my father, "pastils."

"Well, pastils. And, perhaps, if somebody was to smoke about the house," added Kezia, with a look that applied the "somebody" to her master, "for they do say that in the Great Plague, the tobacconists were the only unaffected people in London."

"You are quite correct," said my father, "and if needful, the house shall stink like a tap room. Only in that case, as I never could stomach even a cigar, and your mistress does not smoke, and I will venture to answer for Mrs. Prideaux, you must take to the pipe yourself, Kezia, and do the fumigations."

"And I would, too!" cried Kezia with energy, "if it made me as sick as a dog!"

"Ah, you don't know what you undertake," said my mother. "The truth is, I did once try to smoke my favourite geraniums, to destroy the insects."

"And didn't it kill 'em, ma'am?" asked Kezia.

"By no means," replied my mother. "Quite the contrary; for your master found me insensible in the greenhouse, and the vermin as lively as ever."

My mother's anecdote put an end to the discussion; and my father having finished his breakfast, repaired to the surgery, and posted himself at the desk usually occupied by Mr. Postle. A glance at the blotting-book showed how the assistant's thoughts had been lately occupied, for the paper was covered with rough pen and ink illuminations, in the style called the Grotesque. Amongst the figures, two were particularly prominent and plainly recognisable by their features, however otherwise transformed. Thus the bearded profile of a certain goat was obviously that of Uncle Rumbold—he was, of course, the rampant Bear with the turbaned head of the Great Mogul; and as unmistakably he was the hideous Ogre, elsewhere striding along, and clutching a fat naked child in each hand by the hair of its head. The Demon with horns and a tail was a strong likeness of Doctor Shackle; and the bottle-bellied Spider, with a human face, was evidently the same obnoxious personage. In a third design, he was dangling from a gibbet; and in a fourth, he lent his marked physiognomy to a huge Serpent, which, after a natural coil or two, twisted off into a corkscrew that went wandering half over the paper, as if in search of something to draw. Other emblems were equally significant of the assistant's despondency and the decay of the practice. The mortar, turned into a garden-pot, had a rose growing in it;

and from the physic-basket, converted to domestic uses, protruded a bunch of carrots.

And, in truth, the gloomy prospect entertained by the artist seemed likely to be realised: hour after hour passed away, and still the doctor found himself in the surgery without a patient or a prescription. At last the confinement became so irksome, that he ran up-stairs to the assistant's bed-room, to ascertain the true state of his case. The invalid was still asleep; but restless; grinding his teeth, turning from side to side, muttering, and occasionally tossing his arms and clenched hands, as if labouring under the influence of some horrible dream. Nevertheless he did not awake when the Doctor felt his forehead and examined his pulse: for conscious of an impending illness, and to counteract his nervous excitement, he had taken a narcotic.

"This is more serious than I thought," muttered my father. "He is really ill, and must be looked to when he wakes." And with a heavy heart and step the doctor slowly descended the stairs; at the foot of which he was intercepted by Kezia, with an inquiry after poor Mr. Postle.

"Worse than I could wish," replied my father; and with a deep sigh, he passed into the surgery, paralysed, so to speak, in his professional right arm.

Still there came no customer; a dearth of business less annoying, however, to the proprietor than to another party who looked on. Led by the impulse of old habit, Kezia every now and then made a move towards the surgery, but on looking through the glass door, and seeing my father at the desk instead of Mr. Postle, immediately retreated. Yet these brief glimpses sufficed to fret her with the fact that, come when she would, there never was a living creature with the Doctor, except the leeches. "It's well," she said, "that our cordials and compounds are so nasty; for many a

publican in such a case would take to drinking, and swallow up his own stock in trade."

At last, on one of her visits to the surgery, there was actually a strange man in it; no patient, however, but the carrier, who, having delivered a small parcel, and received the carriage money, immediately departed. My father opened the packet, briefly inspected the contents, and then, with an audible remark, deposited it in a drawer. The remark was meant for himself; but the glass door being ajar, the observation reached another, and not indifferent ear.

All this time my mother was in the nursery discussing with Mrs. Prideaux the topics appropriate to the locality, and in particular the merits of various kinds of food for babes; not forgetting her favourite story of the man-servant who was sent to the biscuit-baker's for the infant victual, and forgetting the name of tops and bottoms, clapped his shilling on the counter, and said "Head or tail." This anecdote she had told, and was just beginning another, when Kezia entered the room, with a melancholy face, of faded red and white, like an ill-dyed handkerchief with the colour partly washed out. She was evidently the bearer of evil tidings, which my mother immediately guessed to refer to Mr. Postle.

"Yes, poor Mr. Postle is very poorly," replied Kezia. "The Doctor does not say so implicitly, but he shakes his head, which stands, medically, for the same thing."

"Why, then, we may have a fever in the house, after all!" exclaimed my mother.

"And I have bad news besides," said Kezia, her looks becoming still more gloomy, and her voice more dismal. "Master has got his nymph down from London."

"His what!" cried my mother.

"His nymph," repeated Kezia.

"I conceive she means lymph," suggested Mrs. Prideaux.

"Yes, lymph, or nymph," said Kezia, "it's a pleasanter word than vaccinating matter. However, it's come down from town,—and I wish Doctor Jenner had been hung, I do, before he invented it."

"But are you certain of it?" inquired my mother.

"Quite," answered Kezia: "I saw the parcel. And as soon as Mr. Postle goes down, you will have master up here, at those dear babes to scarify their poor arms, and introduce the beastly virus into their little systems."

Her prophecy was correct. In about half an hour my father made his appearance in the nursery, packet in hand, and proceeded to impart to my mother a piece of intelligence, of which to his surprise he found her already in possession.

CHAPTER XXIII.

OUR VACCINATION.

The practice of vaccination, which has since proved such a blessing to mankind, was received at its first introduction into England with anything but a gracious welcome. Like other great public benefits, it had of course to encounter the opposition of that large class of persons who set their stereotype faces against all innovations; but besides this resistance, active or passive, it involved, in its most material feature, a peculiarity adverse to its popularity. The mere notion of deriving a disease from a brute beast was sufficient to excite a prejudice against it in the minds of the million; and the most absurd stories of the deplorable effects of the cow-pock were currently circulated and believed by the ignorant and

the credulous, especially in the provinces. Narratives were gravely repeated, and swallowed, of horns that sprouted from human heads;—of human feet that hardened into parted hoofs;—of human bodies that became pied or brindled with dappled hair;—in short, the ancient metamorphosis of Iö seemed to have been only an extreme case of vaccination.

My mother, prone to misgiving, and easily *cowed*, readily entertained the common fears and doubts on the subject; an impression in which she was strongly backed by Kezia, who adopted the vulgar opinions to their utmost extent, and devoutly put faith in all the extravagant tales that were told of the victims of the operation. It may be supposed, therefore, that the two females looked with no favourable eye on my father's preparations; indeed, as far as wishing could effect it, the "nymph" and the lancet were more than once thrown out of the window.

"And are you really going, George, to vaccinate the children?" asked my mother, with a faltering voice.

"I really am," replied my father, and then resumed his quiet whistle, whilst he carefully charged a sharp lancet with the vaccine matter.

"Well, if you must, you must," said my mother. "But for my part I cannot reconcile my mind to it; and I'm afraid I never shall. There seems something so unnatural and revolting in transferring the humour of a diseased brute beast into the human frame!"

"Ah! the old story," said my father. "That we may expect to see the bovine humour break out again in horns and a tail. And do you really believe, my dear, that there is any foundation for such popular romances?"

"Heaven knows!" said my mother. "But very strange things are said to have happened from it. Ask Kezia."

"And pray what is your legend?" said my father, turning towards the maid-of-all-work.

"It's about a little girl, sir," replied Kezia, "as was vaccinated down in our part of the country; namely, Suffolk."

"And was turned into a heifer, eh?" said my father.

"Why no, at least not in corporal shape," said Kezia. "And I won't speak positive, though some do, to a pair of little knobs of horns, that one could just feel under the skin on her forehead. But this I know, it was moral impossible to keep her out of the fields, and from running about the common, and wading up to her knees in pools of water."

"Pshaw! a mere country hoyden," said my father.

"Perhaps she were," said Kezia, reddening. "Only in that case she needn't have moo'd whenever a cow did; and what's more, in summer time she always had a swarm of flies about her nose and ears."

"I think I could account for that," said my father.

"Well, then," cried Kezia, "there was one thing that was cow-like at any rate. She couldn't abide scarlet; and when they wanted to put her into a red frock she tore, and butted so with her head, that they were forced to give it up."

"Very good," said my father, again turning towards my mother. "Well, my dear, I have heard Kezia's story, and in spite of it, I think we may safely vaccinate the children, and run the risk of being tossed by them afterwards."

"It's no joke," said my mother in a crying tone, "though you make one of it. It's introducing an animal change into the constitution, and who knows, if such a thing as a murrain was to break out among the cattle, but the children might have it too?"

"Why it would only be according to the old doctrine of sympathy," said my father.

"And why not?" said my mother. "It is well known that if a man is bit by a dog, and the dog afterwards runs mad, the man will go crazy too!"

"A vulgar error, my dear," said my father. "An exploded fallacy. But come; make your mind easy. There is no more danger of the children's having the murrain than of their bursting themselves, as a cow sometimes does, in a clover field. As to the operation itself, it is a mere flea-bite, and I will be responsible for the consequences.—Mrs. Prideaux, may I trouble you to hold this little one on your lap,"—and the wilful doctor took one of the twins from the cradle and placed it in the arms of the genteel nurse.

"I can't—I won't see it done!" screamed Kezia, turning her face to the wall, and throwing her apron over her head.

"Nor I neither," exclaimed my mother, covering her face with her hands. And they were sincere in their horror. We, of this year of grace, 1845, convinced by experience of the beneficial effects of the discovery of Jenner, and consequently wiser in our *Jenneration*, cannot sympathise with the ludicrous terrors that prevailed when vaccination was a new thing. They were nevertheless both strong and general, and hundreds and thousands of females would have had the same dread of the operation as my mother and her maid.

My father, meanwhile, grasping a little plump arm so firmly as to tighten the skin, thrice plunged his lancet obliquely into the flesh; the infant expressing its sense of the proceeding by as many squalls. Had it *bellowed*, there were two persons in the room who would not have been surprised in the least. My father then charged his lancet with fresh lymph, which he introduced into the wounds; and then, having repeated the whole process on the other little fat arm, the babe was exchanged for his twin-brother, who underwent *seriatim* the same operations.

"There!" said my father, as he finished the work. "There, they are insured for life against the smallpox and its disfigurations."

"I wish they may be, and from all disfigurations besides," said my mother, taking her hands from her eyes; while Kezia removed her apron, and turning round from the wall, gazed mournfully on each little arm, scarred with what she called mentally, "the mark of the beast."

THE END OF VOL. IX.

SANDON AND CO., PRINTERS, EDINBURGH.